

Cathedral City Renews Certified Autism Center™ Designation, Reinforcing Its Leadership in Inclusive Communities

Originally designated as a CAC in 2024, the City continues its commitment to accessibility through ongoing staff training and expanded community initiatives.

CATHEDRAL CITY, CA, UNITED STATES, August 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ --

The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) proudly renews the [Certified Autism Center™](#) (CAC) designation for the [City of Cathedral City](#), recognizing its continued commitment to creating welcoming and inclusive experiences for autistic and sensory-sensitive residents and visitors. Originally designated as a CAC in 2024, Cathedral City has maintained its certification by ensuring that at least 80% of resident-facing staff complete updated autism and sensory training and by continuing to expand accessibility initiatives throughout the community.



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City Manager Andrew Firestine

"Renewing our Certified Autism Center™ designation reaffirms a commitment that has become part of who we are as a city," says City Manager Andrew Firestine. "What began as a training initiative has grown into a lasting culture of acceptance — reflected in the events we host, the way our staff and first responders serve residents, and the welcoming environment we work to create every day. I'm proud that Cathedral City continues to lead on inclusion, and this renewal ensures we'll keep raising the

bar for the residents and visitors we serve."

"The City of Cathedral City has been an invaluable partner in creating inclusive, welcoming experiences for individuals with autism and other intellectual and developmental differences and their families," says Juanita Hernandez, Senior Program Specialist at Autism Society Inland Empire. "Through its support of our annual Color the Spectrum Autism Art Festival, including the use of the Cathedral City Amphitheater and the collaboration of City staff, the City consistently demonstrates a commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and community engagement. Their support helps create a safe and supportive environment where individuals and families feel welcomed, connected, and celebrated. Together, we have expanded opportunities for social connection, community participation, and belonging for hundreds of families throughout the Coachella Valley."



"Sensory-inclusive, adaptive programming embodies the spirit of inclusion and celebration that we want Cathedral City to be known for — it's our autistic and sensory-sensitive residents and their families seeing themselves reflected in their own community," says Ryan Hunt, Director of Communications & Engagement for the City of Cathedral City. "Our Certified Autism Center™ designation gives us a foundation to build on, and we're looking to create even more spaces where every resident feels they belong."

Cathedral City continues to expand opportunities for inclusive community engagement through sensory-inclusive programming, community partnerships, and ongoing staff training. These efforts include:

- Color the Spectrum Autism Art Festival at the Cathedral City Community Amphitheater, featuring artwork by artists on the spectrum, a marketplace of autism entrepreneur vendors, and family activities. Presented in partnership with Autism Society Inland Empire and the Irene W. & Guy L. Anderson Children's Foundation.
- Fall Carnival and Resource Fair, hosted at the Amphitheater on October 4, 2025, by Variety

Children's Charity of the Desert, also a Certified Autism Center™, and United Cerebral Palsy of the Inland Empire. The free event offered adaptive games, sensory-friendly activities, music, treats, and connections to local resources for families.

Cathedral City's first responders and frontline staff continue to complete the certification training as part of onboarding, helping the City maintain the required training threshold for its CAC designation.

"Since first becoming a Certified Autism Center™ in 2024, Cathedral City has continued to demonstrate that accessibility is an ongoing commitment rather than a one-time achievement," says Myron Pincomb, IBCCES CEO & board chairman. "By renewing its certification, the City is reinforcing its dedication to continuous learning, inclusive community engagement, and ensuring autistic and sensory-sensitive residents and visitors continue to feel welcomed, supported, and valued."

By renewing its CAC designation, Cathedral City continues to contribute to the broader accessibility initiative led by Visit Greater Palm Springs, which helped the region achieve the [Certified Autism Destination™](#) (CAD) designation. The CAD designation means visitors have access to multiple trained and certified options throughout the destination, including dining, entertainment, recreation, and lodging.

For 25 years, IBCCES has been a leader in providing autism, sensory, and neurodiversity training and certification for professionals worldwide, including those in healthcare, education, public safety, travel, and corporate sectors. As the only credentialing board offering these programs, IBCCES provides training from subject matter experts and autistic self-advocates, along with long-term support, continuous learning, onsite reviews, and renewal requirements to ensure continued growth and lasting impact.

To further support inclusivity efforts, Cathedral City is featured on the IBCCES Accessibility App, which is free to download. This app provides individuals with a variety of disabilities real-time guidance on certified destinations, sensory-friendly spaces, and tailored recommendations. By connecting users to accessible locations worldwide, the app helps ensure seamless, enjoyable experiences for everyone.

IBCCES also provides access to resources such as [AccessibilityCertified.com](#) and [AutismTravel.com](#), which are free online tools for families that list certified locations and professionals. Each organization listed on the sites has met IBCCES certification requirements.

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About Cathedral City

Cathedral City is the second-largest city in the Coachella Valley, serving more than 52,000 residents. With a thriving downtown arts and entertainment district, diverse and inclusive

community, and year-round events, Cathedral City is one of the region's fastest-growing communities. The City continues to invest in housing, economic development, public safety, and quality-of-life improvements. For more information, please visit cathedralcity.gov for city services and meeting agendas or discovercathedralcity.com for news, events, and attractions.

About IBCCES

Delivering the global standard for training and certification in the fields of autism, neurodiversity, and accessibility – IBCCES provides a series of certification programs that empower professionals to be industry leaders and improve the outcomes for the individuals they serve. For 25 years, IBCCES has been a global leader, setting the industry standard in autism and cognitive differences training. IBCCES works in over 125 countries and provides training in 8 languages, and its programs have been recognized around the world as the leading benchmark in training and certification.

In addition to individual certification programs, IBCCES partners with cities, destinations, and organizations on initiatives like the Certified Autism Destination™ (CAD) and Autism Certified City™ (ACC), ensuring autistic and sensory-sensitive residents and visitors feel welcomed and safe. Destinations that achieve the CAD designation have completed a specialized program that ensures a multitude of recreation, hospitality, and entertainment organizations have completed an autism and sensory-sensitivity training, certification, and IBCCES facilities review process. The ACC designation expands on that program and includes IBCCES training and certification for the public safety, education, healthcare, and workplace sectors.

IBCCES also created the Accessibility App, AutismTravel.com, and AccessibilityCertified.com – free resources for individuals with a variety of neurodiversities and disabilities, listing certified locations and connecting individuals to other resources and each other.

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