



Helping People and Families Affected by Autism

www.delautism.org

Autism Delaware, Lower Delaware Autism Foundation Merger Frequently Asked Questions

Why did Autism Delaware and the Lower Delaware Autism Foundation decide to merge?

The two organizations have long realized that they shared a common mission and vision. We live in a time when resources are scarce and advocacy must be strong; therefore the two boards felt it was in the best interests of the autism community as a whole to join efforts and to speak with a united voice. This provides a better setting for expanding adult services into Sussex County, while eliminating unnecessary administrative costs. POW&R is supported by the state, but start-up money is not provided and state dollars are not enough to keep the program running. Through the merger, money raised by both organizations can go to funding POW&R in southern Delaware. By 2012, adults with autism across the state will be able to benefit from the intense staff ratios of the POW&R program, which allow adults to be fully connected to their communities

How will this merger benefit those affected by autism in Delaware?

By combining their efforts, Autism Delaware and the Lower Delaware Autism Foundation will be able to speak with one voice on behalf of all those in Delaware affected by autism. This concentrated message will allow us to more effectively reach our legislature, schools and communities. By centralizing administrative and program expenses, the combined organization will also be able to extend programs and services more equally across the state while operating with increased efficiency.

What is POW&R and when will it be available in lower Delaware?

Productive Opportunities for Work & Recreation – or POW&R – is a unique community-based program dedicated to helping adults with autism spectrum disorders find and be successful at employment, volunteer activities and recreation. Funded by the Delaware Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, POW&R's full-time staff members assist adults with autism and their families to develop a circle of support and create a plan and budget based on individual choices. Services are provided wherever the person chooses to reside, socialize, recreate, or work.

Autism Delaware's goal is to implement POW&R services in southern Delaware by July 2012.

For more information about POW&R, contact POW&R Director Katina Demetriou, 302-224-6020 or via email at Katina.Demetriou@delautism.org.

Will individuals and families in lower Delaware lose any services that they have come to expect?

The combined organization, Autism Delaware, will continue to offer summer camp, summer swim and golf programs previously established by the Lower Delaware Autism Foundation. While fundraising activities in lower Delaware will change, the Autism Ball and the Race for Autism will continue in order to support local operations and programs.

In order to assure continuity, five former LDAF board members, all parents of children with autism, will join the Autism Delaware board. The new Autism Delaware board members are John Willey, Karen Shaud, Dale Oberender, Dorian Kleinstuber and Nancy Bellingier. In addition, Melissa Tice Martin from LDAF will join Autism Delaware and staff an office in Lewes.

Will individuals and families in upstate Delaware lose any services that they have come to expect?

Services throughout Delaware, including in upstate Delaware, will continue to expand to serve the growing needs of our families and individuals affected by autism. Programs available to upstate residents, such as teen night and parent coffee hours, will continue and will be expanded to lower Delaware as resources permit.

My child has just been diagnosed with autism. Who can I reach out to for support?

Autism Delaware's parent mentors provide one-on-one phone support for families working through the early days of an autism diagnosis. Parent mentors like Daphne Carrnight, Cheryl Frampton and Heidi Mizell have experience navigating the intricacies of diagnosis, care and education with their own families. They care deeply about helping families and can open the door to the many resources available for individuals with autism in Delaware.

What social supports are available to families through Autism Delaware?

Autism Delaware has a full calendar of social events for both individuals on the spectrum and their families. Parent mentors located both upstate and downstate

provide one-on-one support to parents of children newly diagnosed with autism. A full slate of social activities is available for parents and children, as well as teenagers and adults on the spectrum. An interactive calendar of events is located at www.delautism.org. We continue to look for volunteers around the state who can help us expand social activities.