

# Survey

## Autism Action Plan for Nova Scotia

September 2024

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### **Purpose**

Autism Nova Scotia is working with the provincial government to create an Autism Action Plan for Nova Scotia. The Action Plan will list ways that services and supports for autistic people<sup>1</sup> and their families should be changed. The Action Plan should help to make services and supports better for all autistic people in Nova Scotia.

Autistic people are guiding the work to create the Action Plan. Hearing from the community through a consultation is also very important. Anyone can participate in the consultation, including autistic individuals who want to share their experiences.

The consultation will help to identify ways that things can be improved for autistic people across their lifespan. This survey is part of the consultation. By taking part in this survey, you'll help us pinpoint what's working well, where there is room for improvement, and how autistic individuals in our community can be better supported.

For more information about other ways to provide your input during the consultation, please see [the Autism Nova Scotia website](#).

Your participation in the survey is voluntary. It will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers, and you can skip any questions you don't want to answer.

### **How to Complete the Survey**

You can complete the survey online or on paper.

You can complete the survey **online** by going to this link: <http://oursurvey.ca/AutismActionPlan>

You can complete the survey on **paper** by printing this survey and mailing it to:

Vick Harvey  
Autism Nova Scotia  
5945 Spring Garden Rd.  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 1Y4

You can also drop off a completed survey at any of Autism Nova Scotia's Chapter offices located across the province. Please check the Autism Nova Scotia website and contact the Chapter closest to you for hours and availability.

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<sup>1</sup> There are different opinions about how to talk about autism. Some prefer person-first language, like saying "person with autism." Others prefer identity-first language, such as "autistic person". We have chosen to use identity-first language in accordance with the preferences of many autistic individuals and researchers.

If you need support to complete the survey or submit it, please contact Autism NS at [actionplan@autismns.ca](mailto:actionplan@autismns.ca) or 1-877-544-4495.

### **Confidentiality**

All your responses to this survey will be kept confidential – only the consultant hired to support the Action Plan (Research Power Inc.) will have access to individual survey responses. Please do not include your name anywhere on the survey.

The information collected through the survey will be combined with other information from the consultations in a report. The report will be used to help Autism Nova Scotia and the Government of Nova Scotia create the Action Plan. Quotes from the survey will be used, but all quotes will be anonymous and any identifying information (names, places) will be removed.

By completing the survey, you agree that you have reviewed this information and consent to participate.

**Thank you for your time and helping us understand how to improve supports and services for autistic people in Nova Scotia.**

1. I am a: (select all that apply)\*

\*Required Question

- Autistic person (self-diagnosed/self-identifying)
- Autistic person (formal diagnosis)
- Parent/caregiver of an autistic person
- Other family member of an autistic person (e.g., partner, grandparent, sibling)
- Service provider who works with autistic people (e.g., health care provider, community support worker)
- Educator/school staff (e.g., principal, teacher, educational assistant, etc.)
- Interested community member
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Based on your own experiences or things you've heard from others, what existing programs and services in Nova Scotia are most helpful to support autistic people and their families?

*You can write as much or as little as you would like.*

3. Based on your own experiences or things you've heard from others, what services or supports are missing or not adequate for autistic people and their families in Nova Scotia? Please share how these gaps have affected your life.  
*You can write as much or as little as you would like.*

The next few questions list ideas for improving services/supports/programs for autistic people in Nova Scotia. These are things that might be included in the Autism Action Plan.

These ideas come from reports from the [Canadian Academy of Health Sciences](#), [Autism Nova Scotia](#), and the [Autism Alliance of Canada](#).

We would like to know which of these ideas (potential actions) are most important to you. The ideas listed are general, and the details will be confirmed later in the action planning process. For each question, please choose up to five actions you think are most important in Nova Scotia. Please list them in order, with the one at the top being the most important. If you have an idea for an action that is not on the list, please select "Other" and add a description in the next question.

A more detailed explanation and definition for any word that is **highlighted in yellow** can be found in the [Glossary](#).

4. Please select up to five actions from the list below to be included in the action plan to improve **education and support for student transitions** (e.g., moving from daycare to school, from school to work). This includes all levels of education (preschool, grade primary to 12, college or university).

*Number your choices from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide **standardized**, mandatory autism training/professional development to people working in the education system at all levels.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ensure all autistic students are aware of **accommodations** and supports available to support their education.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improve access to accommodations and support for autistic students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increase financial supports for autistic people to attend college, trade school, and/or university.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Implement anti-bullying and autism acceptance campaigns in schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create more and different ways for autistic students to find work when they are finished their schooling (including trades and technical programs).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Develop support programs for autistic students when they enter the public school system (Grade Primary) and when they graduate or leave the public school system.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increase the use of **Universal Design for Learning** to create learning environments that are **accessible, inclusive, equitable**, and challenging for every learner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

5. Please select up to five actions from the list below to be included in the action plan to improve **community and health care supports and services** including screening, diagnosis, early years supports, and access to care for physical and mental health and wellbeing.

*Number your choices from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide **standardized**, mandatory autism training/professional development to people working in health and community systems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increase access to early intervention supports based on needs and involve parents and caregivers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reduce waiting times and costs for diagnosis across the lifespan, particularly for older children and adults.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improve access to mental health supports for autistic people and their families.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improve the way different supports and services that autistic people may use connect to each other and communicate with each other.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide more support to help individuals and families navigate (find and access) the services they need across the lifespan (e.g., through regional autism resource centres).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Develop and implement **guidelines** for providing health care to autistic people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide more types of supports that are specifically designed for autistic people (e.g., mental health services, **self-advocacy** training).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increase access to therapies that autistic people may want such as **speech-language therapy**, **physical therapy**, and **occupational therapy** across the lifespan.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improve access to **respite** support for families of autistic individuals of all ages.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

6. Please select up to **five** actions from the list below to be included in the action plan to improve **economic inclusion**. This means giving autistic people a chance to participate fully in the economy, including access to income, employment, and housing. Please choose up to five actions you think are most important in Nova Scotia.

*Number your choices from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide standardized, mandatory autism training/professional development to workplaces.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create programs and resources for workplaces to support the hiring of autistic people (e.g., guidelines, human resources supports, awards, financial support or programs).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increase supports for work readiness and work experience for autistic people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Train and provide job coaches to help autistic people find and keep jobs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increase access to programs and financial support for autistic individuals who want to be self-employed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increase access to financial support for autistic people (e.g., through disability support programs, employment programs, other income and benefit programs).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide more options for safe, affordable, and **accessible** housing in the community for autistic people, especially those with more complex support needs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide funding to help autistic people and their families with costs for things like transportation, therapeutic products, and home modifications.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide access to supports and services for **financial planning** and **financial literacy**.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

7. Please select up to five actions from the list below to be included in the action plan to improve **social inclusion**. This means autistic people being able to participate fully in society. It includes things like addressing **stigma** and **discrimination**, supporting community participation, and access to transportation.

*Number your choices from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Create social opportunities that help autistic people build relationships that are meaningful to them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Implement education campaigns to promote autism **acceptance** and **inclusion**.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide standardized, mandatory autism training/professional development to service providers (e.g., people working in recreation and leisure, social services, law enforcement, public safety, the legal system).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increase access to programs/supports that help autistic people develop the skills to be more autonomous in various aspects of their lives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create and provide **autism alert cards** that help autistic people share their needs with others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Implement suicide prevention programs/supports and anti-bullying campaigns that are developed by autistic people, for autistic people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Develop and implement **standards** (requirements) for **inclusive** and **accessible** transportation (transportation options that meet the needs of all, including autistic people).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create more safe, sensory-friendly, **accessible** spaces that are also mindful of **physical** and/or **cognitive disabilities** that autistic people may experience.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increase access to **community recreation** and **leisure programs** that meet the needs of autistic people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improve access to technology (assistive and other technologies) that help autistic people communicate and participate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you have anything else you'd like to share that would help us develop the Autism Action Plan for Nova Scotia?

Please tell us a little bit more about yourself. This information helps us understand who has answered the survey and whose voices may be missing.

9. How old are you?

- 18 and under
- 19 to 30
- 31 to 45
- 46 to 60
- 61 to 75
- 76 or older
- Prefer not to say

10. Where are you located?

- Central Region (Halifax to Sheet Harbour)
- Northern Region (Cumberland County, Pictou County, Colchester County)
- Tri-County (Western) Region (Shelburne, Yarmouth, Clare, Digby)
- Annapolis Valley Region (Annapolis Royal to Windsor)
- South Shore Region (Barrington Passage to St. Margaret's Bay)
- Strait Area Region (Antigonish, Port Hawkesbury, St. Peter's Cheticamp)
- Eastern Shore Region (Canso, Sherbrooke)
- Cape Breton Region (Sydney, Louisburg)
- Prefer not to say

11. I identify as: (please select all that apply)

- Indigenous
- African Canadian
- Francophone
- Newcomer to Canada (less than 5 years)
- Part of 2SLGBTQIA+ community
- None of the above
- Prefer not to say



**Please answer the question below only if you are an autistic person or parent/caregiver of an autistic person.**

12. You indicated that you are an autistic person or that you are the caregiver of an autistic person. Please select your/your child's level of support needs. If you have more than one child with different needs you can select multiple options, otherwise please choose one option only.

- High support needs
- Medium or moderate support needs
- Minimal support needs
- No day-to-day support needs
- Fluctuating support needs
- Prefer not to say

**Please answer the question below only if you are an autistic person or parent/caregiver of an autistic person.**

13. You indicated that you are an autistic person or that you are the caregiver of an autistic person. Please select the option that best describes your/your child's primary method of communication. If you have more than one child with different methods of communication you can select multiple options, otherwise please choose one option only.

- Fully verbal
- Minimally verbal
- Communicate through writing and/or text
- Echolalia
- Use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) (e.g., text-to-speech software, PECS, etc.)
- Use sign language/form of signed language
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

14. What is your current employment status? (select all that apply)

- Work full-time (self-employed or for employer)
- Work part-time (self-employed or for employer)
- Unemployed, currently seeking work
- Unemployed, not seeking work
- Unemployed, unable to work
- Student
- Retired
- Stay-at-home parent or spouse/partner
- Employed but on leave from work (e.g., sick leave, parental leave)
- Prefer not to say

15. What is your approximate household income before taxes?

- \$24,999 or less
- \$25,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$124,999
- \$125,000 or more
- Prefer not to say

***Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.***