

Agenda

Health, Rights, and Inclusion: Addressing the Needs of Aging Autistic Individuals

Tuesday, 9th June 2026 – 11.30am-12.45pm
Conference Room 12, UN HQ New York

Side-Event at the 19th Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

International Sign interpretation and Closed Captioning will be provided

Sponsor:

- Permanent Mission of the Bahamas to the United Nations in New York

Co-sponsors:

- Permanent Mission of the Republic of Malta to the United Nations in New York
- Autism Research Institute, United States
- Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability – Malta

Welcome and Introduction (9 minutes)

Chair – Alistair de Gaetano, Ph.D., Chairperson, Malta Autism Advisory Council 2 minutes

Ambassador Stan Oduma Smith, Permanent Representative of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas to the UN in New York 3 minutes

Ambassador Natasha Meli, Permanent Representative of Malta to the UN in New York 3 minutes

Stephen M. Edelson, Ph.D., Chief Science Officer, Autism Research Institute, United States 3 minutes

Life Span Inclusion – Understanding the emerging issue of aging and autism

(9 minutes) *Overview of outcomes from the 2025 UN think tank discussion*

Christopher Palmer, Projects Manager, Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, Malta (CRPD)

A Bahamian Perspective (9 minutes) *Unique, intersecting realities of aging and autism, challenges of late-in-life diagnosis, life expectancy, co-occurring conditions, and a blueprint for healthy aging for autistic older adults*

Indira Minus-Grimes, MBBS, DM, PGDip., Family Medicine Physician and Gerontologist; Medical Services Advisor, Public Hospitals Authority, Bahamas; Chair, Bahamas National Council for Older Persons

Health Care and Aging (Physical Health) (9 minutes) *Focus on chronic conditions, diagnostic challenges, medication risks, and the need for improved provider training, documentation, and individualized care planning*

Margaret Bauman, M.D., Neurologist, Boston University School of Medicine, United States

Mental Health and Community Inclusion (9 minutes) *Focus on anxiety, depression, social isolation, and the long-term impact of adapting to non-inclusive environments, with emphasis on community-based support*

Kimberly Armstrong, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist; Department of Psychology, Simon Fraser University; Department of Psychiatry, University of British Columbia; Spectrum Works Consulting Group, Canada

Lived Experience (9 minutes) *Personal perspective on navigating health and mental health systems, highlighting barriers, unmet needs, and effective supports*

Dena Gassner, Ph.D., Senior Research Scientist, AJ Drexel Autism Institute, Drexel University, United States

Interactive Engagement with Participants (15 minutes)

An open floor for participants to ask questions, share experiences and engage with the panellists

Reflections by Discussant (4 minutes)

Reflections will be offered by MEP Alex Agius Saliba, Co-Chair of the European Parliament's Disability Intergroup, and promoter of the 2023 European Parliament Resolution on Harmonising the Rights of Autistic People

Concluding Remarks (2 minutes)

The Chair will offer concluding remarks following the discussion