

## **Advocates for Autism Awareness –Sample**

Advocates for Autism Awareness is a group of families providing hope and support to one another; striving to build partnerships between families & professionals; and promoting community awareness through education, information & advocacy.

We seek to impact individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders in future by serving families and professionals in Central Kentucky.

### **Our Goals:**

- 1) Develop a social and support network
- 2) Provide opportunities for family education
- 3) Promote Autism Awareness and Advocate

### **Strategies we will use to reach these goals include:**

- Share highs and lows at meetings
- Network with other support groups in the area
- Collaborate with local families and professionals
- Promote awareness in schools (PTA) and with other families
- Share ideas and information
- Learn from one another
- Have fun

### **Potential topics for speakers:**

- IDEA/NCLB
- Mental Health Services
- Behavioral Services
- Sensory Issues
- Medical Issues
- Transition
- Estate Planning
- Collaboration with School
- Current Research
- Safety
- Information technology and education
- IEP development
- Types on new therapy
- Puberty

### **Groups to reach in order to promote awareness**

- Bourbon Festival
- First Responders
- Law Enforcement
- Medical Professionals
- Policy makers and local leaders
- Religious Organizations
- Community “at-large”

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### Next Steps before May meeting:

Set-up Facebook Account	Heather
Revise previous listservs and emails	Charla
Invite folks from previous AAA to join Facebook	
Reach out to other area support groups (Fayette, Washington and Marion Counties)	
Press release for next meeting (refer folks to the Facebook page)	
Explore start-up funds from Opportunities for Family Leadership or Kentucky Developmental Disabilities Council (what's the plan for the \$\$\$)	

**Big Ideas:**  
Autism Walk  
Mini-Conference

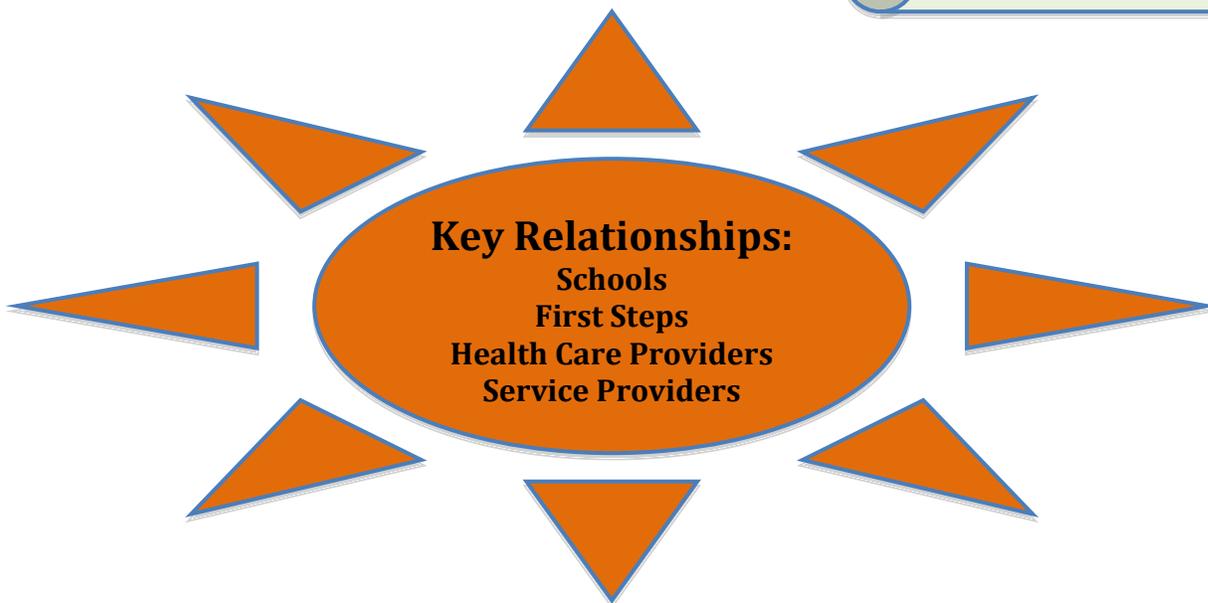


#### Things to plan for:

- Speaker schedule
- Support time
- Fun time
- Bourbon Festival

#### Key Relationships:

Schools  
First Steps  
Health Care Providers  
Service Providers



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### Resources for Advocates for Autism Awareness to Reach Goals

Support	Education (Potential Speakers)	Awareness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get to know one another!</li> <li>• Down the road might consider contacting a local therapist (psychologist or marriage and family therapist) to facilitate a meeting</li> <li>• KATC can talk about stress</li> <li>• Schedule “get togethers” at diverse times. (i.e. coffee in the a.m., lunch, afternoon walk, trip to the park)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Education Cooperatives</li> <li>• KATC</li> <li>• Local providers</li> <li>• The ARC</li> <li>• Council on Developmental Disabilities</li> <li>• Partnership for Families and Children</li> </ul>	<p>KATC has awareness brochures for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police</li> <li>• EMTs</li> <li>• Firefighters</li> <li>• Grandparents</li> <li>• Siblings</li> <li>• Friends</li> </ul> <p>Centers for Disease Control – “Learn the Signs. Act Early” Materials</p>

**Friends of AAA:**  
 Graphic Designer  
 Copy Shop  
 Snacks

Goal 1:

Objectives	Strategies	Activities	Leadership	Time-Line	Results
1)	1)				
2)	2)				
3)	3)				

Goal 2:

Objectives	Strategies	Activities	Leadership	Time-Line	Results
1)	1)				
2)	2)				
3)	3)				

Goal 3:

Objectives	Strategies	Activities	Leadership	Time-Line	Results
1)	1)				
2)	2)				
3)	3)				

## Identify and Engage the Key Community Stakeholders

Role	Email	Telephone	Counties	Message	Role
School District Superintendents					
Individual Schools and each School's Principal					
School District Special Education Directors					
Family Resource Youth Service Centers					
Special Education Cooperative Staff					
Clinical Supervisor Community Mental Health Center					
Manager – First Steps Point of Entry					
Existing Parent-Related Groups					
Potential Media Resources					
Director – Local County Health Department					
Local Health Care Professionals					
Local Businesses with an Interest in Autism					
University faculty and staff					

## Create a “marketing” plan

You will want to get the information about your new group to as many people as possible.

Suggestions to accomplish this:

- Consult with an online service provider database on the Kentucky Autism Training Center (KATC) website. Share the information about your group with those providers listed in your area
- Contact the local hospitals, area therapists (mental health, occupational, and speech therapists), comp care centers, and your Special Education Cooperative. These folks may be a great source of support in getting the information about your group to parents they think will benefit from the support.
- Consider sending an email to everyone in your address book. Ask those contacts to forward your information to others they think might be interested. You just never know who might be familiar with someone that has a family member with autism. Your contacts' contacts can benefit from the information that you send.
- If you have a local newspaper, submit an article or a letter to the Editor (these are actually at no cost, as opposed to buying ad space) and put flyers around town (in physicians' offices, in the windows of local businesses, in the public library, in local churches, in local hospitals and comp care centers).
- If your community has a community college or university, you might consider contacting various schools of education within the institution (such as education, social work, psychology, speech pathology, and occupational therapy) to share information about your group.
- Notify the individual schools within your target area as well as the Special Education Department in the district's Central Office. You can often place flyers in the local schools, at the Central Office, or send a stack to go home in students' backpacks.
- Some support groups have gotten air time on local a radio station to raise awareness of autism in general, as well as to talk about their group and their groups' events.
- Utilize existing listservs to publicize your group. As your group grows, consider forming your own listserv to target those individuals you know would benefit from the information. You can also consider sending me an email at [rebecca.grau@louisville.edu](mailto:rebecca.grau@louisville.edu) with all your information and I can put the information out on the statewide KATC listserv.

## Sample Letter for Key Stakeholders

**DEAR TITLE AND LAST NAME OF YOUR PUBLIC OR SCHOOL OFFICIAL:**

The demands and challenges of raising a child with autism can be overwhelming. The importance of parent-to-parent support cannot be overstated. Talking with another parent is a great place to find practical everyday help for issues that may be difficult. To help meet the needs of local parents, we have formed **THE NAME OF YOUR SUPPORT GROUP**.

I would like to personally invite you to become involved with our group. We meet at **PLACE, ADDRESS, and DATE**. The goal of our group is to provide education, training, and support to parents with children on the autism spectrum.

I will contact you by phone within the next two weeks to follow-up on this invitation. Again, I hope you can join us on **DATE**.

Thank you for your support of children and their families within our community.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Name of Support Group

Support Group Mailing Address

Your Phone Number

Your Email Address

## Example of a Press Release

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1 in 110 children are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life, and impacts an individual's ability to communicate and interact with others. According to the April 2008 issue of *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, each individual with autism accrues about \$3.2 million in costs to society over his or her lifetime, with lost productivity and adult care being the most expensive components.

Parent-to-parent support is very important in raising a child diagnosed with autism. A support group for families affected by autism spectrum disorders (ASD) is forming in **CITY and/or COUNTY**. This group is open for attendance by parents and caregivers of children and adults with ASD. The purpose of this group is to help parents cope with the issues faced in raising children diagnosed with ASD. Our meetings are held each month and will feature speakers and discussion to provide information and support to assist parent as they care for their child with special needs. Those interested in joining our group can contact **NAME** at **PHONE and/or EMAIL** for more information.

Supports for individuals with autism are available on a statewide level through the Kentucky Autism Training Center (KATC). The center's mission is to enhance supports for persons with autism by providing information and technical assistance to families and service providers across Kentucky. For more information about autism, including resources available in Kentucky, visit the KATC website as <https://louisville.edu/education/kyautismtraining/>.