

Autism Grant


Dakota and Ramsey County Project Overview



Community Engagement

The goal of the Dakota and Ramsey County Autism Grant was to **increase community support** for people with autism or related conditions and their families. Dakota and Ramsey Counties developed a work plan centered on the idea of **respite through community inclusion** and highlighting the **value** and **contributions** of all individuals.

Project Design



Based on listening sessions with 237 stakeholders - including people with autism, family members and professionals - **three primary opportunities** were identified to expand support for people with autism and caregivers.

1

TRAINING

Training opportunities for caregivers, community members, and organizations to expand knowledge and increase capacity to support people with autism and similar support needs. A total of 64 trainings were hosted reaching more than 2,000 individuals.

2

FAMILY GRANTS

Small grants for families to address system gaps, increase access for those not receiving support, and encourage self-direction to accomplish community inclusion and respite. The grant team approved 120 Family Grants.

3

SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

Service development partnerships to promote community inclusion and respite. In total, 10 organizations were awarded funding for new programs that served more than 220 individuals and families.

Sustaining the Work

- **Shared lessons learned with DHS, project partners, and many others including:**
 - Flexible funding helps people build supports that work for them and have a lasting impact
 - There is incredible energy within each community—county and state work should focus on bolstering community efforts
 - System change takes time and long-term commitment
 - Help is needed for people and families to navigate the complex system of supports for people with autism.



- **Planned for long-term impact by:**
 - Connected partners to new funding opportunities;
 - Developed shareable tool-kits and learning modules;
 - Crafted policy recommendations; and
 - Formed “ Innovations Group” made of various stakeholders to continue to work after the grant ends



‘These experiences have truly inspired, enriched, engaged, and transformed their lives.’ – Parent and family grant recipient

‘This project is the closest thing to “person-centered” I’ve seen from the county or state of MN – Advocate



WANT MORE INFORMATION?

To review tool-kits, hear success stories or read the full report visit the Dakota County website at: <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/HealthFamily/MentalHealth/Autism>

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