

Rock County Equity Brief

April 2023

OBSERVE

Autism Acceptance Month

In 1972, the Autistic Society established National Autistic Children's Week as part of its efforts to educate people about the autism spectrum and how to support autistic people. This evolved into a month-long observance known as *Autism Awareness Month*, which became widely observed throughout the autism community.

In the 2010s, many individuals and organizations, most prominently the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, began to shift toward observing the month as *Autism Acceptance Month*. The use of this name was formally adopted by the Autistic Society in 2021. Along with the change in the name, many have called for autism advocacy campaigns to prioritize acceptance and to be refocused on the viewpoints and experiences of autistic people.

April Day(s) Group, Culture, or Cause Recognized

All Month	Community Service Month
All Month	Earth Month
All Month	Arab-American Heritage Month
All Month	Tartan (Scottish-American) Heritage Month
All Month	Celebrate Diversity Month
2	World Autism Awareness Day
7	International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda
14	National Day Of Silence
19	Youth Homelessness Matters Day
21	Advisor Appreciation Day
22	Earth Day
28-29	The Ninth Day of Ridvan



For more information on Autism Acceptance Month:
<https://iacc.hhs.gov/meetings/autism-awareness-month/2022/>



RECOGNIZE

Lei Wiley-Mydske

Lei Wiley-Mydske is an autistic activist that promotes autism acceptance, social justice, disability rights, and neurodiversity. Lei is the director and founder of the Ed Wiley Autism Acceptance Lending Library. Wiley-Mydske is also the community outreach coordinator of the Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (AWN).

The lending library is the home of the Neurodivergent Narwhals, which are several colorful cartoon narwhals that tackle everything from COVID-19 to the different ways people communicate, in a series of educational infographics and stories that parents and educators can use to teach about disability justice and what it means to co-create a more inclusive world.

Source: <https://awnnetwork.org/resource-library/>

LEARN

What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and **differences are not viewed as deficits**.

The word neurodiversity refers to the diversity of all people, but it is often used in the context of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as well as other neurological or developmental conditions such as ADHD or learning disabilities. The neurodiversity movement emerged during the 1990s, aiming to increase acceptance and inclusion of *all* people while embracing neurological differences. Through online platforms, more and more autistic people were able to connect and form a self-advocacy movement. At the same time, Judy Singer, an Australian sociologist, coined the term neurodiversity to promote equality and inclusion of "neurological minorities."



While it is primarily a social justice movement, neurodiversity research and education are increasingly important in how clinicians view and address certain disabilities and neurological conditions.

Source: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/what-is-neurodiversity-202111232645>

ACTION

Neurodiversity in the workplace

Stigma, a lack of awareness, and lack of appropriate infrastructure (such as office setup or staffing structures) can cause the exclusion of people with neurodevelopmental differences. Understanding and embracing neurodiversity in communities, schools, healthcare settings, and workplaces can improve inclusivity for all people. It is important for all of us to foster an environment that is conducive to neurodiversity, and to recognize and emphasize each person's individual strengths and talents while also providing support for their differences and needs.

How can we make our workplace more neurodiversity-friendly?

- Offer small adjustments to an employee's workspace to accommodate any sensory needs, such as:
 - Sound sensitivity: Offer a quiet break space, communicate expected loud noises (like fire drills), offer noise-canceling headphones.
 - Tactile: Allow modifications to the usual work uniform.
 - Movements: Allow the use of fidget toys, allow extra movement breaks, and offer flexible seating.
- Use a clear communication style:
 - Avoid sarcasm, euphemisms, and implied messages.
 - Provide concise verbal and written instructions for tasks, and break tasks down into small steps.
 - Inform people about workplace/social etiquette, and don't assume someone is deliberately breaking the rules or being rude.
 - Try to give advance notice if plans are changing, and provide a reason for the change.
- Don't make assumptions — ask a person's individual preferences, needs, and goals.



According to advocacy group Autism Speaks, many adults with autism are either unemployed or underemployed. This is often due to the misconceptions regarding the skillset of individuals with autism and perceptions regarding those individuals' so-called, "soft skills." "Employers are often unaware of the common strengths shared by many people with autism, including intense attention to detail, commitment to quality and consistency, creative and 'out of the box' thinking, excelling on repetitive tasks, lower turnover rates, honesty, and loyalty."

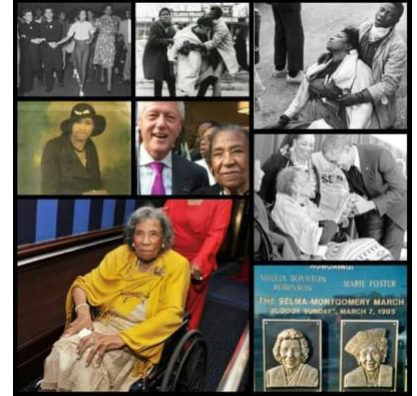
Source: <https://www.fisherphillips.com/news-insights/5-ways-embrace-neurodiversity-workplace.html>

BRIEF RECAP: March 2023

OBSERVE

Black History Month

In 1980, a consortium of women's groups and historians—led by the National Women's History Project (now the National Women's History Alliance)—successfully lobbied for national recognition. In February 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation declaring the Week of March 8th, 1980, as National Women's History Week. Subsequent Presidents continued to proclaim a National Women's History Week in March until 1987, when Congress passed Public Law 100-9, designating March as "Women's History Month."



RECOGNIZE

Amelia Platts Boynton Robinson

Amelia Boynton Robinson was a civil rights pioneer who championed voting rights for African Americans. Amelia Boynton's earliest activism included holding Black voter registration drives in Selma, Alabama, from the 1930s through the '50s. In 1964, she became both the first African American woman and the first female Democratic candidate to run for a seat in Congress from Alabama.

Amelia Platts Boynton Robinson

LEARN

Local YWCA History

In 1905, a group of prominent Janesville women met at the home of Miss Sue Jeffris to form a YWCA. At the time, however, the national YWCA would not establish a local group in a community of less than 25,000 people. Eventually, in 1921, local organizations, including women's organizations in Janesville, succeeded in forming the YWCA and received nonprofit status in September of 1922 – therefore, 100 years ago.

TRAINING

Rock County DEI Training

All employees must complete two DEI training per year. There are a variety of diverse topics and training formats provided to all employees. Please note that one of the trainings must be from the County DEI list to fulfill your County DEI requirement, and one training can be from a community partner or outside DEI training (if it meets the DEI training requirements). New employees are only required to participate in one equity training within the year of their hire.

FAQ's

How can I check my training completion status or submit outside training certificates?

Email all questions and submissions to - equity@co.rock.wi.us

When is the last date to submit 2023 training information?

December 30th, 2023