

Autism, Aging, and Healthcare Needs

Program Description

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder, was first identified almost eighty years ago. As both the prevalence of the disorder and research into the disorder has increased over the last eight decades, unfortunately little information is still available into the needs of aging autistic adults. This informative and interactive workshop will provide participants with awareness and insights into the world of the needs of aging adults, ages 50+, with an Autism diagnosis.

Information provided in this presentation will address the presence of older autistic adults in society, their changing and increasing healthcare needs and mental healthcare concerns, limitations to service access across healthcare fields, and general care and concerns of aging. Through a presentation on recent research around autistic aging, limitations in current information and practices will be highlighted. Participants will learn to recognize the challenges facing aging autistic adults living in our society.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this workshop, participants should be able to:

1. Describe issues in accessing healthcare services by aging autistic adults.
2. Understand the history of issues related to diversity, social and economic inequities as it relates to the impact of overall health of autistic adults.
3. Define and describe the various issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion as it relates to autistic adult's engagement with the healthcare system.
4. Identify co-occurring mental health concerns for the aging autistic populations.
5. Discuss the limitations to current research base on autism and aging.
6. Explain the importance of identifying service needs early for aging autistic adults.
7. Name the impact of de-institutionalization practices on aging autistic adults.

Target Audience

Human Services Professionals, medical professionals, professionals working in the autism field, family members, and anyone interested in this topic.

Contact Hours

1.0 to 4.0 hours

Program Agenda

Available upon request

Faculty

Molly Marus-Quinley, MSW, LCSWA, is a Psychotherapist at Neurodiversity Empowerment Services in Cary, NC, focused on working with autistic and ADHD individuals across the lifespan. Molly is a North Carolina native and a 2020 MSW graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Social Work.

Prior to receiving her MSW, she worked for UNC's Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute as a research assistant on a study on teaching self-regulation skills to early elementary school students with self-regulation difficulties. She has passionately pursued learning opportunities surrounding supporting neurodivergent individuals over the past ten years. Prior experiences include serving as a co-chair of the neurodiversity caucus within the UNC School of Social Work and participating as a Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) trainee at UNC Chapel Hill.