2026 Pennsylvania Autism Training Conference (PATC) 2026
Life in Motion

Conference Agenda (all presentations will include ASL and closed captioning)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4		
9:00 – 9:15 AM	***Welcome and Opening Remarks***	**Amy Alford, BSASP Clinical Director** **Kristin Ahrens, ODP Deputy Secretary** **Lynn Pascoa, BSASP Director, ODP**
9:15 – 10:30 AM	***The Autistic Professionals Guide to the Workplace*** **Shea Belsky, Self-Advocate** Navigating the modern workplace involves decoding unwritten social rules, managing sensory environments, and meeting intense executive functioning demands. This session provides a practical toolkit for neurodivergent professionals to self advocate, manage their energy, and thrive as they enter the workforce. Additionally, support professionals, families, and caregivers will learn actionable strategies to confidently coach and empower the autistic adults they support to navigate corporate structures and negotiate their own success.	**Shea Belsky** is an autistic advocate. He is an Engineering Manager at HubSpot and a Board Member for AANE, the Association for Autism and Neurodiversity. Shea brings several unique perspectives on neurodiversity. He is the manager of neurodivergent and neurotypical employees, has reported to neurodivergent and neurotypical managers, and has advocated for the needs and wellbeing of all who seek to be heard and understood in the workplace. He also hosts his own podcast, Autistic Techie, empowering neurodivergent self advocates to feel more confident in the workplace.
10:30-10:45 AM	**BREAK**	
10:45–11:45 AM	***Financial Self-Care*** **Diana Fishlock, PA ABLE Outreach Specialist; Will Hall, CEO, Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation** This workshop will focus on small steps individuals with disabilities can take and build on to improve their financial wellbeing, increase their savings, lower anxiety about finances and create a system of financial self-care, health and wellness. It will include information about the PA ABLE Savings Program as well as traditional bank products and newer ways to save and borrow money. Building a nest egg and reducing debt decreases stress and increases one's sense of security and self-esteem.	**Diana Fishlock** shares information about the PA ABLE Savings Program throughout PA as the PA ABLE Outreach Specialist for the PA Treasury's Bureau of Savings Programs. Diana's mother and sister worked with individuals with disabilities, so Diana grew up hearing about disability issues, and has been passionate about disability topics for many years. She is the mom of two young adults with disabilities. **Will Hall** has served as the CEO of the PA Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF) since August of 2024. Prior to joining PATF, he served as the Deputy Executive Director of Policy & Programs for Philadelphia's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity.

2026 Pennsylvania Autism Training Conference (PATC) 2026
Life in Motion

Conference Agenda (all presentations will include ASL and closed captioning)

11:45–12:45 PM	**Lunch Break and enjoy some classical jazz piano tunes by Colin Mekeel**	
12:45 – 2:00 PM	***From Avoidance to Access: Teaching Tolerance For Medical Care*** **Stephanie Jones, Executive Director, FUNctional Connections** This presentation highlights a proactive approach to increasing healthcare access for adults with disabilities through structured desensitization and practice sessions. By using weekly, one-hour exposures to medical and dental procedures,individuals build tolerance, reduce anxiety and decrease reliance on sedation to access basic medical care/examinations. Attendees will learn practical strategies to implement similar programs and improve health outcomes.	**Stephanie Jones** received a MA in Special Education from Ball State, BCBA since 2012, and Licensed Behavior Specialist in PA. Growing up in the rainy Pacific Northwest, Stephanie was driven from an early age to reshelve the books by color, reorganize the linen closet so every towel was precisely folded, and relentlessly play teacher to siblings and cousins. It is probably not a surprise then that she ended up with a lifelong career supporting Individuals living with autism.
2:00-2:30 PM	**BREAK**	
2:30 – 3:15 PM	**KEYNOTE SPEAKER** **Kaelynn Partlow, Love on the Spectrum TV Personality & Content Creator**	**Kaelynn Partlow** was diagnosed with autism at the age of 10. She is best known for her appearance on the Netflix series Love on the Spectrum, where she became a recognizable and relatable voice for autism advocacy. Through her social media platforms, Kaelynn reaches millions with a message of meaningful inclusion, practical strategies, and systemic change. She is the author of Life on the Bridge, a book that draws from both her personal experiences and professional expertise to bridge the gap in understanding between autistic and non-autistic people. Since joining Project Hope Foundation in 2015 as a Registered Behavior Technician, Kaelynn has played a key role in leading therapy sessions, mentoring staff, developing training materials, and providing nationwide autism education as a public speaker.
3:15 – 3:20 PM	***Closing Comments and Announcements***	

2026 Pennsylvania Autism Training Conference (PATC) 2026
Life in Motion

Conference Agenda (all presentations will include ASL and closed captioning)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5		
9:00 – 9:15 AM	***Welcome and Opening Remarks***	**Amy Alford, BSASP Clinical Director, ODP**
9:15 – 10:30 AM	***Emotional Regulation in Daily Community Living*** **Dr. Kelly Beck, Pitt REAACT, Pittsburgh Adult Autism Research Community Collaborative Lead** The University of Pittsburgh Regulation of Emotion in Autistic Adults, Children, and Teens (Pitt REAACT) Program conducts research aimed at improving mental health and well-being for autistic people across the lifespan. Our work focuses on identifying factors that contribute to emotion dysregulation, developing meaningful ways to measure outcomes that matter to autistic people, developing and testing community-informed supports and interventions, and promoting environments that foster acceptance of autism.	**Dr. Kelly Beck** is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh and a scientist specializing in supporting mental health for autistic and neurodivergent individuals. Her research focuses on understanding factors that promote emotional well-being and reduce mental health challenges across home, school, healthcare, and community settings. Dr. Beck co-developed the Emotion Awareness and Skills Enhancement (EASE) program, an evidence-based mindfulness-based intervention for autistic youth and adults, including individuals with co-occurring intellectual disability. She is the founder of the Schools Unified in Neurodiversity (SUN) Collaborative, which partners with public schools to improve the school environment for autistic and neurodivergent children.
10:30-10:45	**BREAK**	
10:45–11:45 AM	***Yoga, Belonging, and Autism: Lessons from a Community-Based Participatory Research Project*** **Tessa Karel, Open Up Co-Founder and Executive Director; Dr. Rachel Robertson** This session shares lessons learned from SWAY, a community-based participatory research partnership between autistic community members, researchers, and Open Up, an inclusive yoga and mindfulness nonprofit centered on disability inclusion. Presenters will	**Tessa Karel** is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of Open Up, a Pittsburgh-based nonprofit expanding access to inclusive movement, mindfulness, and wellbeing education. A former special education teacher with nearly a decade of classroom experience, Tessa holds a master's degree in Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies and is a certified yoga teacher. Her work

2026 Pennsylvania Autism Training Conference (PATC) 2026
Life in Motion

Conference Agenda (all presentations will include ASL and closed captioning)

	explore how accessible yoga and mindfulness practices can support mental health, sensory needs, agency, and sense of belonging for autistic children and adults while offering practical strategies for creating autism-affirming environments across schools and community spaces. Participants will learn concrete accessibility practices including visual supports, sensory considerations, communication flexibility, routines, opportunities for self-determination, and strategies that promote belonging rather than compliance. The session will also examine the importance of participatory approaches that center autistic lived experience in research and program development.	focuses on creating accessible, disability-centered approaches to wellbeing that foster belonging, connection, and self-advocacy. At Open Up, Tessa works alongside schools, nonprofits, and community partners to build more inclusive and responsive spaces for learning and wellbeing, **Dr. Rachel Robertson** is an associate professor of special education, board certified behavior analyst, and certified K-12 special education teacher. Her research focuses on 1) supporting the implementation of positive behavior interventions and supports for autistic students and persistent challenging behavior, and 2) the development and benefits of community-based physical activity programs for autistic children and adults. She teaches courses related to special education, applied behavior analysis, and research design.
11:45–12:45 PM	**Lunch Break and enjoy some classical jazz piano tunes by Colin Mekeel starting at 12:30**	
12:45 – 1:45 PM	***Hobbies and Healing: A Self-Advocate Panel Discussion on Regulation Rituals*** **Facilitator: Dr. Kerry Magro; Panelists: Kevin Hillman, Morgan Colpetzer, Lawrence Harris, Steve Frok** Join this lively discussion led by award-winning national speaker and best-selling author, Kerry Magro. Panelists will share experiences and unique perspectives from their professional and personal daily lives. Their insights will highlight activities and strategies that help them self-regulate and relax, inspiring others to explore	**Kerry Magro** is an award-winning national speaker and best-selling author. Kerry has become a role model in the disabled community. Non-verbal at 2.5 and diagnosed with autism at 4, Kerry has overcome countless obstacles to get to where he is today. In May of 2019, Kerry received his doctorate in Educational Technology Leadership from New Jersey City University to become Dr. Kerry Magro. He currently is CEO and Founder of KFM Making a Difference, a non-profit

2026 Pennsylvania Autism Training Conference (PATC) 2026
Life in Motion

Conference Agenda (all presentations will include ASL and closed captioning)

	their own hobbies, interests, and healing practices.	corporation focused on disability advocacy and housing. **Kevin Hillman** is a creative filmmaker and co-founder of Uproot Creative Services. A graduate of Kutztown University, Kevin began his career in broadcast journalism/ government communications before turning to Uproot full-time. He lives with his wife, Miranda, and their son. Together they run *Lancaster Plays Games*, a growing community of board game enthusiasts. Diagnosed with ASD at age 33, and connected with ASERT, forming a partnership developing video resources for the autistic community. **Morgan Colpetzer** has gained a deeper understanding of her own neurodivergence through years of advocating for her daughter. This became monumental in shaping her work as a school nurse, advocating for students in her rural area. Working with children from elementary age through college, I recognized how often masking and self-advocacy gaps came at the expense of a child's mental health throughout life. Helping these students feel seen, understood and supported gave Morgan a profound sense of purpose and inspired her to further her own education in crisis management, neuropsychology, and advocacy. **Lawrence C. Harris** is a Youth Empowerment Speaker and Author who helps teens and young adults build self-worth, regulate their emotions, make healthier decisions, and develop the skills they need to

2026 Pennsylvania Autism Training Conference (PATC) 2026
Life in Motion

Conference Agenda (all presentations will include ASL and closed captioning)

		succeed in school and beyond. Through his lived experience and his Think, Feel, Live Different framework, Lawrence helps young people change the way they think, manage their emotions, make better decisions, and take meaningful steps toward creating a life they're proud of. **Steve Frock** is an adult with Austism Spectrum Disorder and lives in Chester County, PA. Steve has published an autobiography and is working on his second book. Steve wrote his first book because he wanted others with autism to know they are not alone, and those who don't have autism to understand what it is like to live with ASD. In addition to writing, Steve loves to read and is an avid bowler, competing in many tournaments.
1:45 – 2:00 PM	**BREAK**	
2:00 – 2:45 PM	***Call to Action: A Panel Discussion with PATC Presenters*** **Facilitator: Amy Alford, BSASP Clinical Director, ODP; Panelists: Shea Belsky, Stephanie Jones, Dr. Kelly Beck** This panel will include a few of our conference presenters. Panelists will offer a diverse array of perspectives and reflections based on their experiences and participation in the conference, including major takeaways from this conference. Join the discussion and offer your thoughts and plans for action.	
2:45 – 3:00 PM	***Closing Comments and Announcements*** **Amy Alford, BSASP Clinical Director, ODP**	