



ASAN Strategic Goals 2021–2024

Overarching goals

Anti-racism

Across all areas of ASAN's policy and legal advocacy, programming, and internal operations, ASAN will prioritize inclusion, representation, and equity for autistic people of color.

- In addition to considering the impact upon disabled people of color whenever we work on a policy issue, ASAN will identify and work on specific disability policy areas that disproportionately impact autistic people of color, such as police violence, immigration justice, and voting rights.
- ASAN will create resources to help self-advocates advance anti-racism and racial justice.
- ASAN will use our leadership programming to deliberately and proactively invest in the next generation of autistic leaders of color.
- ASAN will use our social media presence to amplify the perspectives of autistic and other disabled people of color and educate our community on intersectional advocacy.
- ASAN will build and deepen partnerships with racial justice organizations.
- ASAN will increase the number and proportion of our staff and board who are people of color. And, we will ensure we are putting in place good internal practices and structures to support our values, our staff and board members of color, and our commitment to anti-racism.

All means All

ASAN will fight for the inclusion of nonspeaking autistics, autistic people with intellectual disabilities, institution survivors, and autistic people with high support needs or multiple disabilities.

- ASAN will advocate for policies that ensure the civil and human rights, inclusion, and dignity of all autistic people, regardless of our support needs, ability to use oral speech, or additional disabilities.
- ASAN will advocate for the closure of all institutions, and the end of segregation, exploitation, and low expectations for autistic people with the most significant disabilities.
- ASAN will deepen our partnerships with organizations led by people who use AAC or people who have intellectual disabilities, as well as other disability rights organizations focused on serving people with developmental disabilities.
- ASAN will increase the number of ASAN staff and board members who use AAC or who have intellectual disabilities.
- In addition to our continuing work on Easy Read, video, and other cognitively accessible resources, ASAN will deepen our commitment to cognitive accessibility and will explore additional ways to include autistic people who cannot currently access these resources.
- ASAN will address lateral and internalized ableism within the autistic community by promoting a culture of inclusive self-advocacy which centers nonspeaking autistics, autistic people with intellectual disabilities, institution survivors, and autistic people with high support needs or multiple disabilities. We will continue to prioritize these parts of our community in our policy work and programming, and will use our social media presence to amplify their perspectives.

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network seeks to advance the principles of the disability rights movement with regard to autism. ASAN believes that the goal of autism advocacy should be a world in which autistic people enjoy equal access, rights, and opportunities. We work to empower autistic people across the world to take control of our own lives and the future of our common community, and seek to organize the autistic community to ensure our voices are heard in the national conversation about us. Nothing About Us, Without Us!

Collaboration

ASAN will deepen our existing relationships with other civil rights organizations, build new connections, and use our partnerships to serve our entire community.

- ASAN will deepen our relationships with LGBT and reproductive rights and justice organizations and work together to advance policies that support the rights of autistic people of all genders and sexual orientations.
- ASAN will expand and deepen our relationships with racial justice organizations, and work in partnership to advance policies to end police violence and mass incarceration, create a just immigration system, and ensure the civil rights of people of color and people with disabilities are protected in areas such as education, housing, voting, and more.
- ASAN will continue to emphasize cross-disability advocacy in our work, and will continue to work in coalition with numerous other disability organizations. We will push other disability rights and disability justice organizations to be more inclusive of people with cognitive disabilities. We will continue to provide technical assistance on cognitive accessibility and inclusion to other disability organizations, and will release guidance on how to create Easy Read documents.

Outreach

ASAN will invest in new ways to expand our reach to underserved communities.

- ASAN will prioritize reaching parts of the autistic community that are underserved or underrepresented, including people with limited internet access or digital literacy, people living in institutions and group homes, immigrant communities, tribal lands, and communities of color. ASAN will do this in partnership with these communities.
- ASAN will partner with organizations providing direct services to underserved and underrepresented communities to assist with resource dissemination. ASAN will also partner with advocacy organizations with strong state and local presence in these communities, such as DD councils or People First groups.
- ASAN will work to make more of our resources available in printed formats and in languages other than English.

Power

ASAN will work to build the power of the autistic community.

- ASAN will increase the visibility of our “behind the scenes” and day-to-day policy work and partnerships, to keep our grassroots up to date on the work we are doing toward our policy goals.
- ASAN will increase our focus on amplifying the work of, and connecting people to, autistic people and groups doing vital work focusing on culture, community and belonging.
- ASAN will continue to develop more and more tools our grassroots can use to advocate on issues that are important to them. We will build the autistic community’s ability to organize and engage in effective advocacy in our local communities.
- ASAN will continue to work to support the growth of self-advocate led organizations serving the needs of local autistic communities. We will work with current affiliates to build their organizational capacity, and assist emerging leaders and groups.
- ASAN will continue to provide opportunities and supports for self-advocates to participate in civic engagement and make our community’s voice heard. We will increase the size and strength of our advocacy campaigns, and build power over time until our community can reliably compel decision-makers to take action.
- ASAN will continue to fight to protect voting rights. This includes the rights of people with disabilities to accessible and private voting methods, and the right to vote even if under guardianship. We will continue nonpartisan work to increase voting among people with disabilities, especially people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including providing accessible information and resources about the importance of voting and how to vote.

Policy goals

Nothing about us, without us

ASAN will work to make sure that autism policy and research serves autistic people.

- The needs of autistic people are usually similar to people with other developmental disabilities, and our civil rights are the same as all people with disabilities. But most autism-specific policy advocates for regressive and restrictive approaches. ASAN believes that we can best meet the needs and protect the rights of autistic people by advocating for policies that benefit people with disabilities broadly. Where autism-specific policy is discussed, we will advocate for our community to shape these policies.
- ASAN will continue to advocate for a research agenda that reflects the priorities of the autistic community. We will fight for more research dollars to go towards understanding and supporting autistic people across the lifespan, instead of towards “preventing” autism or trying to make autistic people seem neurotypical.
- ASAN will advocate that the next reauthorization of the Autism CARES Act increase self-advocate representation on the IACC, promote autism acceptance, and rebalance research dollars.
- ASAN will fight the spread of ABA. We will push for every autistic child to have access to respectful, person-centered supports, instead of abusive therapies.
- ASAN will continue to change how autism is talked about in our society. We will work to increase authentic portrayals of autism, and to make sure that families, the general public, and autistic people ourselves have access to accurate, positive, and respectful information about autism.

Self-determination

ASAN will fight to make sure more and more autistic people have the basic tools we all need for self-determination.

- ASAN will pursue collaborative advocacy with multiple federal agencies, as well as congressional advocacy, to ensure that AAC is more widely available and that every autistic person has a way to communicate that works for them.
- ASAN will continue to promote supported decision making. We will focus on ways to make supported decision making accessible to people with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and the fewest resources. And, we will continue to fight to prevent, reduce, and ultimately abolish guardianship.

Community living

ASAN will work to ensure that every single disabled person has everything they need in order to live a good life in their own home and community.

- ASAN will work to end the institutional bias in Medicaid and expand access to Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS.)
- ASAN will advocate for more affordable, accessible, integrated housing for autistic people.
- ASAN will advocate for true community integration. We will help states and the federal government implement and build on the HCBS Settings Rule, and we will fight back against attempts to rebrand institutions as “intentional communities.”
- ASAN believes true community integration means that autistic people should control our own services. We will work to make self-direction an option for more autistic people and people with intellectual disabilities.
- ASAN will advocate for important changes to Social Security and other programs, so that people with disabilities don’t have to live in poverty in order to qualify for services.

Ending violence

ASAN will combat the many different forms of violence faced by the autistic community and disproportionately faced by autistic people of color.

- ASAN will support policies to hold police officers accountable for violence, end qualified immunity, demilitarize the police, reduce the policing and criminalization of people of color and people with disabilities, and reinvest funds traditionally spent on policing in alternatives. We will oppose police registries, ineffective police “training,” and other reforms that do not address the root causes of police violence.
- ASAN will advocate for approaches to community safety that provide alternatives to the police and the criminal legal system, including access to community-based crisis services and other community initiatives that reduce interactions with police.
- ASAN will support policies to end mass incarceration. We will support alternatives to incarceration that keep people of color with disabilities, who are overrepresented in prisons and jails, in the community. And we will support the implementation of restorative and transformative approaches that provide real justice for members of our community who are harmed.
- ASAN will fight to ban restraint and seclusion in schools by passing the Keeping All Students Safe Act. We will support other policies to keep students with disabilities safe as well, like ending the use of School Resource Officers, stopping the School to Prison Pipeline, and stopping bullying. And, we will work to end restraint and seclusion in other settings, including institutions.
- ASAN will advocate for policies to help autistic people of all ages be safe at home. This includes working to end child abuse, improving child welfare and adult protective services, and making sure that autistic people can access domestic violence services and resources. And it means ensuring that parents with disabilities have the supports they need to parent their own children--and that disability in and of itself is not seen as abuse.
- ASAN will fight for hate crimes against disabled people to be taken as seriously as those against non-disabled people. We will continue to fight against filicide, and we will continue to describe filicide of disabled people as a hate crime.

Protecting rights

ASAN will fight to protect disabled people’s rights in every area of the law.

- ASAN will advocate to end subminimum wage.
- ASAN will work with our allies to defend the Americans with Disabilities Act from attacks.
- ASAN will work to protect the rights of people with disabilities to use air travel, service and emotional support animals, and assistive technology.
- ASAN will promote meaningful access to the legal system.
- ASAN will fight all forms of discrimination against people with disabilities in health care.
- ASAN will continue to build out the capacity of our legal center, in order to directly represent more autistic people harmed by illegal discrimination.