



Dear Member of the Autism Services Community,

Autism Services, Inc. has been dedicated to providing the highest standard of service and support for people with autism throughout Western New York for more than 30 years. This has remained true despite the fact that in recent years, Autism Services has faced significant operational and financial challenges that were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier this year, Autism Services approached People Inc., a non-profit organization in Western New York that serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, seeking an affiliate to provide assistance with executive management and administrative, back-office support.

Unfortunately, Autism Services is faced with a dire financial situation. We began 2023 with a \$3 million deficit that threatened the future operation of programs, including our two schools, on Elmwood Avenue in Buffalo and Hazelwood Drive in Amherst. When the magnitude of the financial struggles became clear, our affiliation with People Inc. became singularly focused on preserving, maintaining and sustaining Autism Services' schools, programs and services.

Despite aggressive and deliberate efforts to stabilize operations, a strategic assessment revealed these challenges are too great to overcome. I am writing today to share some necessary changes that will ensure the continuation of Autism Services' schools with no disruption for students or families attending the schools. Autism Services' Board of Directors has determined that the only way to preserve Autism Services' schools is to transition operations to another agency with the capacity and expertise to support them. This transition will ensure the continuation of the excellent education provided at Autism Services' schools.

I am pleased to announce that The Summit Center, a local nonprofit known for its expertise in educational programs for students with autism, will expand its school program to provide continued educational and related services at both schools on or about February 1, 2024. This transition will occur with no disruption to the day-to-day life of our students and families. School administrators will remain with the schools in the same locations, and The Summit Center is committed to offering employment opportunities to teachers and other staff in the schools.

We are grateful for The Summit Center's shared commitment to preserving these vital services and recognizing the talent of our incomparable staff. We will work directly with your child's school district to assist in coordinating this transition and will guide you every step of the way. You should expect outreach from your child's Committee on Special Education within the next few days. Should you not hear from your child's school district, please let me know.

**To learn more about this transition, and to have your questions answered, there will be a virtual forum at 6:00 pm on Monday, November 20, 2023. You can join with this link:**  
<https://bit.ly/SummitASIForum20>

[An FAQ document is available for download here.](#) Also, please feel free to email questions to [ASQuestions@autism-services-inc.org](mailto:ASQuestions@autism-services-inc.org) or contact me at 716-817-7419, or Amy Jablonski, incoming President of The Summit Center, at 716-629-3447. We know your child or loved one will continue to thrive as we navigate this transition together.

Sincerely,

Thomas Ess  
Executive Director

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*Creating meaningful opportunities that enrich the lives of autistic people, their families, and their communities.*