



**WASHINGTON**  
AUTISM ALLIANCE

2025 Annual Impact & Appreciation Report





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Our Vision & Mission	3
Letter From the Founder	5
Special Education Spotlight	6
Navigation Impact	7
What Sets Us Apart	8
Legislative Wins	9
Navigator Spotlight	11
2025 Challenges	12
Looking Forward	15
Day Out for Autism	17
The Numbers	19
Night of Revealing Possibilities	20
Grant Appreciation	22
Corporate Partnerships	23
Board Leadership	24
Ways to Give	25
Thank You	27

# OUR BOLD & VITAL VISION

We envision a future in which **all** families in Washington have the resources they need to support the well-being of their loved ones with autism.



# OUR MISSION

**Expanding access to healthcare, education, and essential services for individuals with autism and related intellectual and developmental disabilities.**

Since 2007, our partners and supporters have been pivotal in helping us achieve our mission and bring our vision forward. **Because of you**, we have helped secure a strong legislative foundation for future generations while continuing to walk alongside families today, providing

direct support when it matters most.



**This report reflects on our work in 2025 and affirms our commitment to deepening impact in the year ahead, together.**

# LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

To our wonderful community,

Thank you for a wonderful year of helping us empower individuals and families navigating the path of autism and developmental disabilities. In Washington alone, nearly **143,000** individuals are on the autism spectrum.

At the Washington Autism Alliance (WAA), we are dedicated to expanding access to vital healthcare, education, and support services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and related intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). We stand as champions for these individuals and their families, advocating tirelessly for their needs.

Every day, our dedicated team at WAA hears stories from families facing significant barriers to accessing essential services. These stories fuel our passion to find solutions and break down barriers for the 2,500 children, adolescents, and adults we serve annually. With your support, we can extend our reach and provide life-changing legal services and family navigation at no cost to even more families across Washington State.

Together, we are transforming lives and revealing a future filled with possibilities!

With heartfelt gratitude,



**Arzu Forough**  
President/CEO  
Washington Autism Alliance



*"I love doing what I do because it helps kids who don't always have a voice. The frustration I felt watching my daughter struggle through a system that wasn't set up for her success is my motivation. This is why I work for WAA."*

**- Lisa Cushman, Special Education Advocate**

Dear Lisa,

When I think about a moment of success or positive change, the most important one for me was when I felt a deep connection with you. It wasn't just because you've "been there, done that"; it was because you're also a mother, and like mine, your child is on the spectrum. That shared experience created a space where I could open up quickly and honestly. I remember being overwhelmed with hope and crying...not out of embarrassment, but out of relief and joy. For the first time, I felt seen and understood in a process that has often felt impossible to navigate alone.

Just facing the IEP system with no instructions, no experience, and so much at stake has been incredibly difficult. But that moment with you, that connection...was already a success for me.

As for positive change? You gave me confidence. Not the kind based on vague hope, but the kind rooted in knowing I'm no longer facing this alone. Your presence, your guidance, and your actions make this feel real and possible. You didn't just give me information; you taught me how to speak, how to advocate, and how to stand my ground when it feels like me against the school.

I've always wanted to take this step. Deep down, I knew something wasn't right, but I didn't have the words or the courage to say it out loud. I was so afraid of being dismissed. Because of you, I now know that what I've observed and felt as a mother is valid...not a delusion.

Being Asian, even as a U.S. citizen, I've been conditioned to comply, to say "yes," and not to fight. But what I've learned through you, I can't unlearn. I look forward to the upcoming IEP meeting with you by my side. The hardest part has always been walking into that room alone.

And now I won't be.

# NAVIGATION IMPACT

Our navigation team is dedicated to providing 1:1 support to individuals and families as they navigate complex systems.

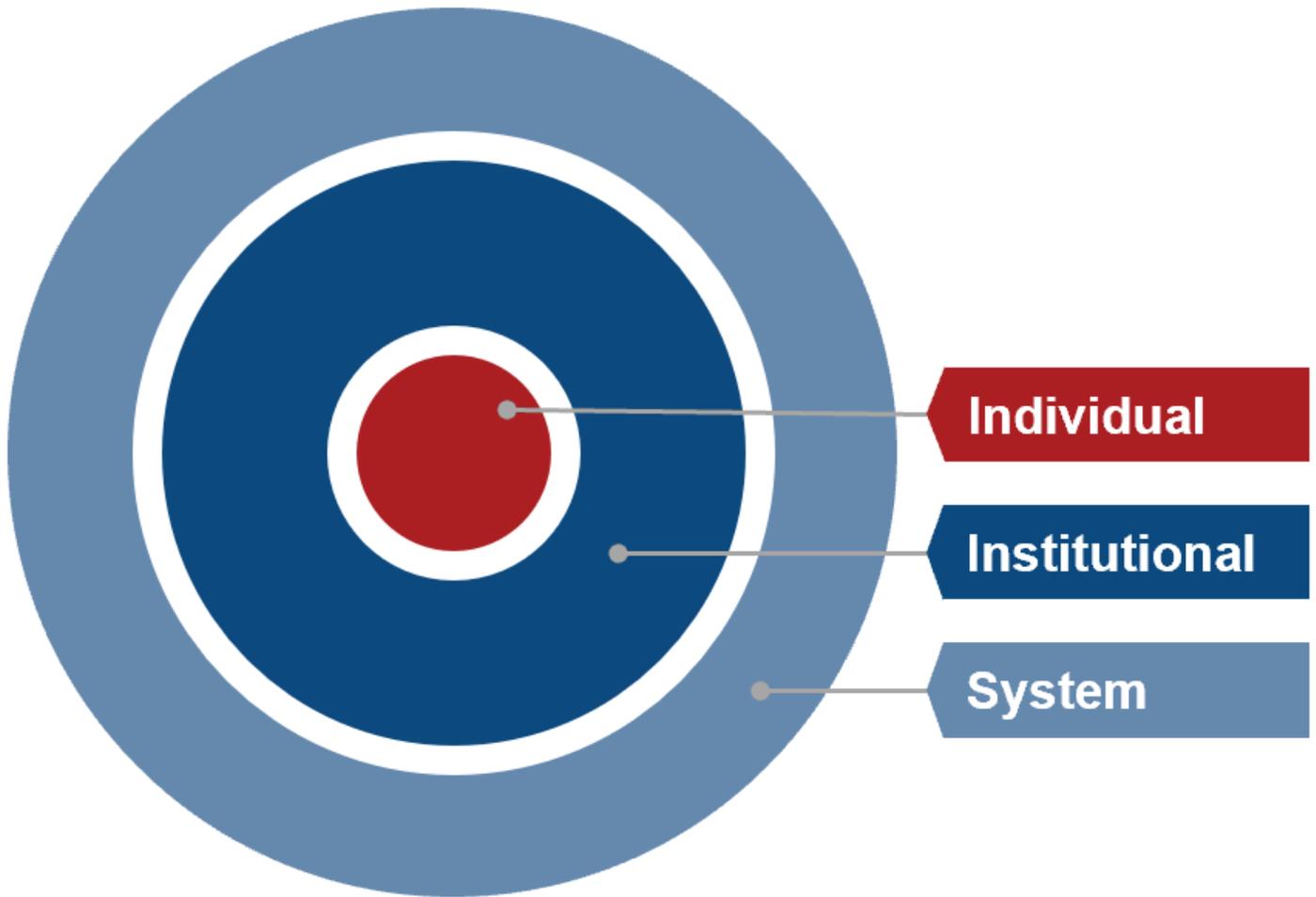
In 2025, we served **845 unique individuals** across Washington, an average of just over 2 people every single day.

*“One day WAA called to check on me. When I told them what I was doing, they said ‘let us see how we are going to help you’. Not IF, but HOW they are going to help. Within days they had arranged online ABA parenting training, and in-home personal therapy for my son! That sounded too good to be true. But thank God, it was true! I don't have enough words to describe how amazing WAA's help has been in our lives. Because of WAA our life has changed for good by getting the services that my child needs.”*  
- Yubisela Terrones



[Learn more about Yubisela's and Brayden's story.](#)

# WHAT SETS US APART



We combine individualized navigation services with legislative advocacy.

This approach ensures immediate help for individuals and families today while creating lasting policy change that will benefit future generations.



Because of your investment in advocacy, WAA founder and legislative champion Arzu Forough stood alongside Governor Bob Ferguson as he signed SSB 5253 into law.

This landmark legislation extends the age at which students with disabilities can receive special education services in Washington. Under SSB 5253, students may now continue receiving services through age 22 or until high school graduation, closing a critical gap for many young adults and their families.

Across the country, special education supports for young adults remain limited, and **far too many students** age out of resources and accommodations before they are ready.

Your support helped change that reality in Washington.

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We are proud to report a highly successful track record of legislative advocacy. As of 2025, we have opened access to service for **14,190** clients directly in the last 7 years, with an average of **2,100** clients served every year, and ensured rights to coverage for over **68,000** people.

We are not simply navigating broken systems. With your support, we are **repairing** them.



*"The reason I love the impact of WAA is because we provide a lifeline of hope and tangible resources directly to families who feel lost."*

*Seeing a parent finally get their child the services and support they need—whether it's through securing insurance coverage or navigating the complex school system—is a powerful reminder that our work truly transforms lives and creates a future where every individual with autism can thrive."*

**- Trish Thrush  
Insurance Appeal Navigator**

*"I am inspired to stand with WAA because I believe every individual deserves access to the resources, respect, and opportunities they need to thrive."*



*WAA creates a sense of belonging. Families and individuals with autism often face isolation, and the Alliance builds bridges—connecting people to support groups, therapies, and advocacy networks. That community spirit motivates me to be part of our mission."*

*WAA reflects values I hold deeply—equity, compassion, and empowerment."*

**- Misha Trivedi, Resource Coordinator**

# 2025 CHALLENGES

# TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE SERVICES

This year, WAA transitioned to a more sustainable service model by implementing long-planned sliding scale fees for navigation services. As a small but mighty team, this shift was essential to ensuring WAA's long-term sustainability and our ability to continue providing highly responsive, quality support to every individual and family we are honored to serve.

Importantly, this transition allows us to continue serving all members of our community, **regardless of their ability to pay.**

Even with these changes, our service fees remain well below the industry average. We are deeply grateful to our community for your understanding, flexibility, and continued trust as we take this important step forward.



# 1 IN 31 CHILDREN

The need for services continued to grow throughout 2025. With 1 in 31 children now diagnosed with autism, a 120 percent increase since 2002, demand is outpacing available resources, **making our work more essential than ever**. As diagnoses rise, families increasingly need support navigating healthcare, education, and vital services, often during moments of urgency and transition.

Because of your support, we were able to respond to this growing need in 2025. As we look ahead to 2026, we invite our supporters to stand with us once more to ensure families continue to receive the guidance and care they need to thrive.



*“The work I provide as a WAA team member is vital to helping families impacted by autism going through crises. The stabilization services allow clients to obtain necessary support they need while going through a challenging time.”*

**- Miriam Reyes, Crisis Stabilization Navigator**

**LOOKING  
FORWARD**

# EXPANDING FAMILY NAVIGATION AS AN EMPLOYEE BENEFIT

In 2026, we aim to begin establishing partnerships with employers across Washington State to offer our navigation services as a high-impact employee benefit.

This expansion will allow us to reach more families, reduce barriers to care, and help working caregivers balance employment and caregiving.

**So families and parents  
don't have to choose  
between their careers and  
the ability to navigate  
complex systems.**

# DAY OUT FOR AUTISM 2026





We are thrilled to announce the return of our signature community event, Day Out for Autism!

This free, family-friendly resource and fun fair will take place on April 18, 2026, at Kirkland's Marina Park. This is a welcoming, sensory-friendly celebration that honors individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities and the families who support them.

Attendees will enjoy games, music, performances, and access to valuable resources and community partners.

**[Click here to learn more!](#)**

Because of you, we exceeded our 2025 fundraising goal by **\$80,000**, totalling **\$580,000**.

## THE NUMBERS

Our 2026 goal is **\$655,000** and we know we can get there with your support!



# NIGHT OF REVEALING POSSIBILITIES





**Thank you to everyone who attended our *Night of Revealing Possibilities*. Your support directly creates opportunities for individuals and families across Washington. Together, we are turning possibilities into tangible impact, and we look forward to continuing this work with you in 2026!**

# Grant Appreciation

We'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the organizations that helped fund our critical work this year. Thank you to the Clifton Larson Allen (CLA) Foundation, Ignite Kirkland, and The Norcliffe Foundation!



**CLA FOUNDATION**

**Ignite**Kirkland

**THE NORCLIFFE  
FOUNDATION**

# CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS



## Sequoyah Electric Adopt-a-Family 2025

Our friends at Sequoyah Electric hosted their annual Adopt-a-Family gift drive where they collected coats, food, and stocking stuffers for WAA families in need. We are so grateful for their generosity!

## Microsoft Giving Season

Thank you to the teams at Microsoft who gave and donated their time to WAA during their giving season! Teams made birthday cards for clients, conducted website audits, and even hosted Zumba class fundraisers!



And last, but certainly not least, we celebrate our board members for their enduring commitment and visionary leadership. We are deeply grateful for their guidance and partnership in turning our ambitious goals into reality!



**Larry Blasko**  
Chairman



**Lindsey Myers**  
Director



**Matt Park**  
Vice Chair, Development  
Committee Chair



**John (Kip) O'Kelley**  
Finance Committee



**Lakshmi Nidamarthi**  
Governance Committee  
Chair



**Christina Regan JD**  
Special Events  
Sub-Committee Chair



**Katie Pelczar**  
Development Committee  
Co-Chair



**Bree Rose**  
Development Committee



**Aruna Aiyar**  
Sectetary

# Board Leadership



# GIVE



# WAYS TO GIVE

In 2025, your generosity created meaningful, lasting change for all those we serve. As we enter 2026, your continued support is **critical** to expanding access to healthcare, education, and essential services across Washington. Join us in making an even greater impact by:

- Donating- Fund programs that directly support the autism community.
- Volunteering- Share your time and expertise to deepen our impact.
- Hosting a Donation Drive for Day Out for Autism- Rally a team to help make our signature event a day to remember!

Every gift, every hour, and every effort brings us closer to a future where all individuals and families impacted by autism have the resources they need to thrive.



The entire team at WAA would like to extend one more emphatic thank you for all you've done to support the autism community. Your generosity and commitment make our work possible and create meaningful impact for families across Washington.

If you have questions about giving or volunteering in 2026, please reach out to us at [philanthropy@washingtonautismadvocacy.org](mailto:philanthropy@washingtonautismadvocacy.org).

**Here's to a hopeful and impactful year ahead!**

