

Amanda Estes, Executive Director - The Autism Collective

The mission of The Autism Collective

Our mission is to end the isolation of autism by uniting experts and connecting families and we intend to be the relentless champion for every person living with autism. Initially we want to provide care coordination services which don't really exist in this community, to link families with the services that are already out in the community. :24

The Autism Collective program will start small but is intended to grow in both geography and age of services provided – how the process will work

We'll start with Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford and McLean counties. Families with children up to age 14 can contact The Autism Collective and asked to speak to either our nurse coordinator or family navigators and it will depend on their needs. And what we'll do is walk them through our process to understand exactly what services they need - is it diagnostics, is it early identification, is it simply access to therapy services - so what our staff will do is link these families to the services they need for their unique needs. :36

The Autism Collective is bringing an ECHO Autism hub to central Illinois, which is huge for children and their families

It educate pediatricians as well as rural family practice providers so that they can become more confident in the screening tools that are used to both identify children with Autism as well as for those providers that are interested they can gain information about not only how to screen, but also how to diagnose and manage a subset of children with Autism. So what that does is it moves knowledge rather than patients, so that these families can access these autism services in the communities where they live rather than traveling sometimes up to multiple hours to access Autism services. :39

Having the ECHO Autism resources available to physicians is huge

For many years we've heard that pediatricians lack the confidence in these screening tools, however, at the same time, these professionals are the consistent point of contact during this important developmental window. They know these children best so are best able to identify these potential children with Autism. :20

The need is great as witnessed by the latest numbers from the CDC. The prevalence is so high you either are directly affected by Autism or know someone who is.

1 in 59 children is affected by Autism, which, in itself, is a staggering number. But locally we know that over 6,000 families are currently receiving treatment for autism, but what I find more staggering is that there's an additional 3,000 families in our area who are unable to access treatment services for a variety of reasons. :25