

The Mental Health Impacts of the Pandemic on the Autism/Disability Community and NIH/NIMH Efforts

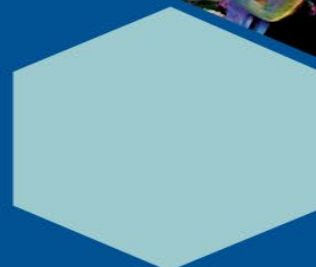
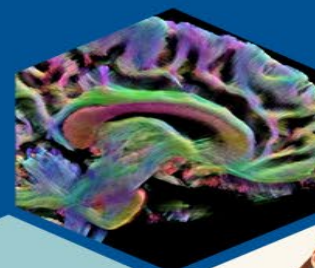
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The Federal Response to COVID-19:
Addressing the Needs of the Autism
and Disability Communities

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Twitter: @NIMHDirector



National Institute
of Mental Health

COVID-19 Has Affected Many Aspects of Life



Individuals on the Autism Spectrum Have Unique Vulnerabilities to Impacts of COVID-19

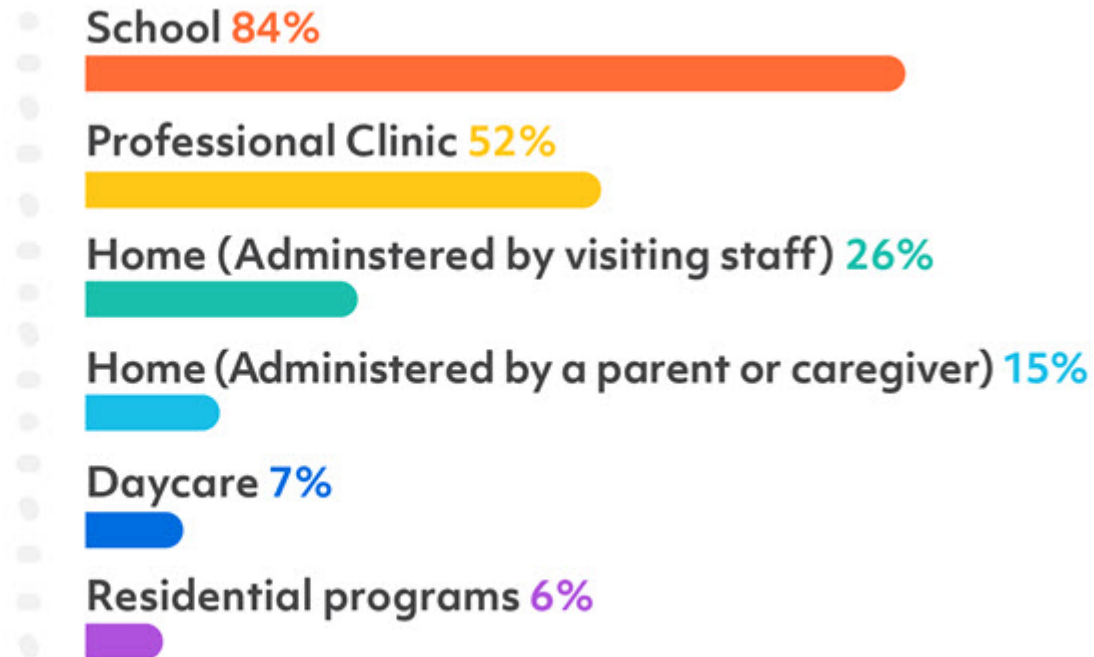
- Higher levels of pre-existing co-occurring physical and mental health conditions
- Increased difficulty with adapting to and being flexible with abrupt changes and other traits can impact resilience
- Increased vulnerability to social isolation and economic hardship
- Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have a higher likelihood of contracting and dying from COVID-19, especially when living in congregate settings



SPARK Survey: Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Families/Caregivers

Survey respondents: 8,000 families with dependents on the autism spectrum; March 2020

Percent of families reporting settings for services or therapies that have been disrupted



SPARK Survey: Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Autistic Adults

Survey respondents: 636 adults on the autism spectrum; March-April 2020

LEVELS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS



Parts of life that have changed due to COVID-19

Social life 70%



Employment (paid or volunteer) 53%



Homelife 48%



Services or therapies 41%



Financial security 36%



School 20%



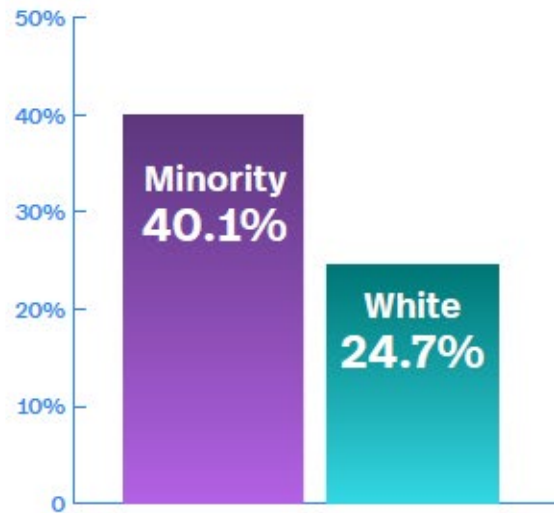
None 6%



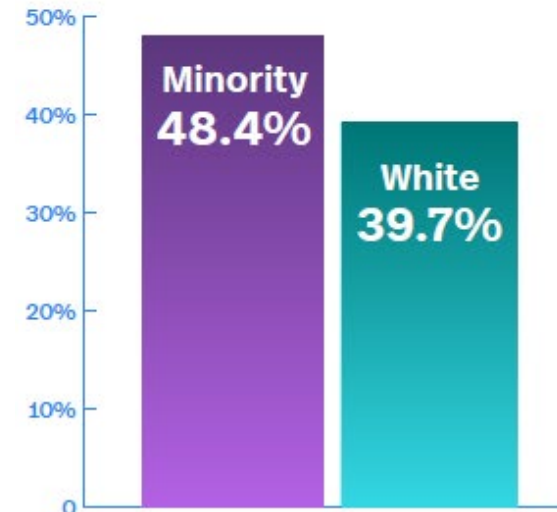
Autism Speaks Study: Food and Housing Insecurity During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Households of people with autism struggled with meeting basic needs like food and housing.

Worried food would run out before respondent had money to buy more



Percent of respondents experiencing housing insecurity



Survey respondents: individuals and families with dependents on the autism spectrum; May 2020

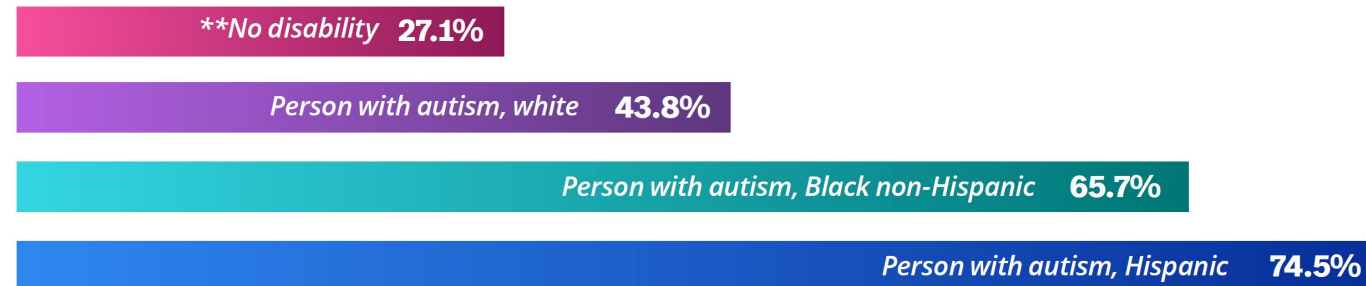
Autism Speaks Study: Food and Housing Insecurity During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Households of people with autism are experiencing significant food insecurity, especially minority households, compared with households with no disability

HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY RATES BEFORE AND AFTER COVID-19



HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY RATES, FALL 2020



Survey respondents: 1,369 individuals and families with dependents on the autism spectrum;
November-December 2020



Promoting Resilience and Long-term Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Meet immediate needs
- Promote health and provide access to care for COVID-19 illness
- Increase access to vaccination for vulnerable populations
- Practice healthy coping habits and make mental health supports accessible
- Avoid social isolation and find ways to help others
- Maintain hope for the future and sense of control



SPARK Surveys: What's Working During the Pandemic?

Autistic adults report:

- ✓ Telehealth
- ✓ Check-ins with therapists via email and phone
- ✓ Journaling
- ✓ Maintaining a schedule and sticking to it
- ✓ Walks and exercise
- ✓ Keeping in touch with family and friends via phone and video chat

Families report:

- ✓ Social stories
- ✓ Breaks for rest and relaxation
- ✓ Telehealth appointments
- ✓ Pursuing hobbies
- ✓ Cooking for family
- ✓ Enjoying time with family in person and virtually



March-April 2020

Potential Positive Impacts of the Changes Brought on by the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Innovations in service delivery such as increased use of telehealth
- Increased parent/caregiver involvement in delivery of interventions
- Increased remote education and employment opportunities
- Increased use of virtual platforms for socializing & community interactions
- Some report reduced social demands and social stress



IACC/OARC Online COVID-19 Resources for the Autism Community

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

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Resources

Coronavirus

- Federal Agencies
- Private and Non-Profit Organizations
- Federal Advisory Committees
- State Resources
- Community Participation Opportunities

IACC Home > Resources > Coronavirus Resources

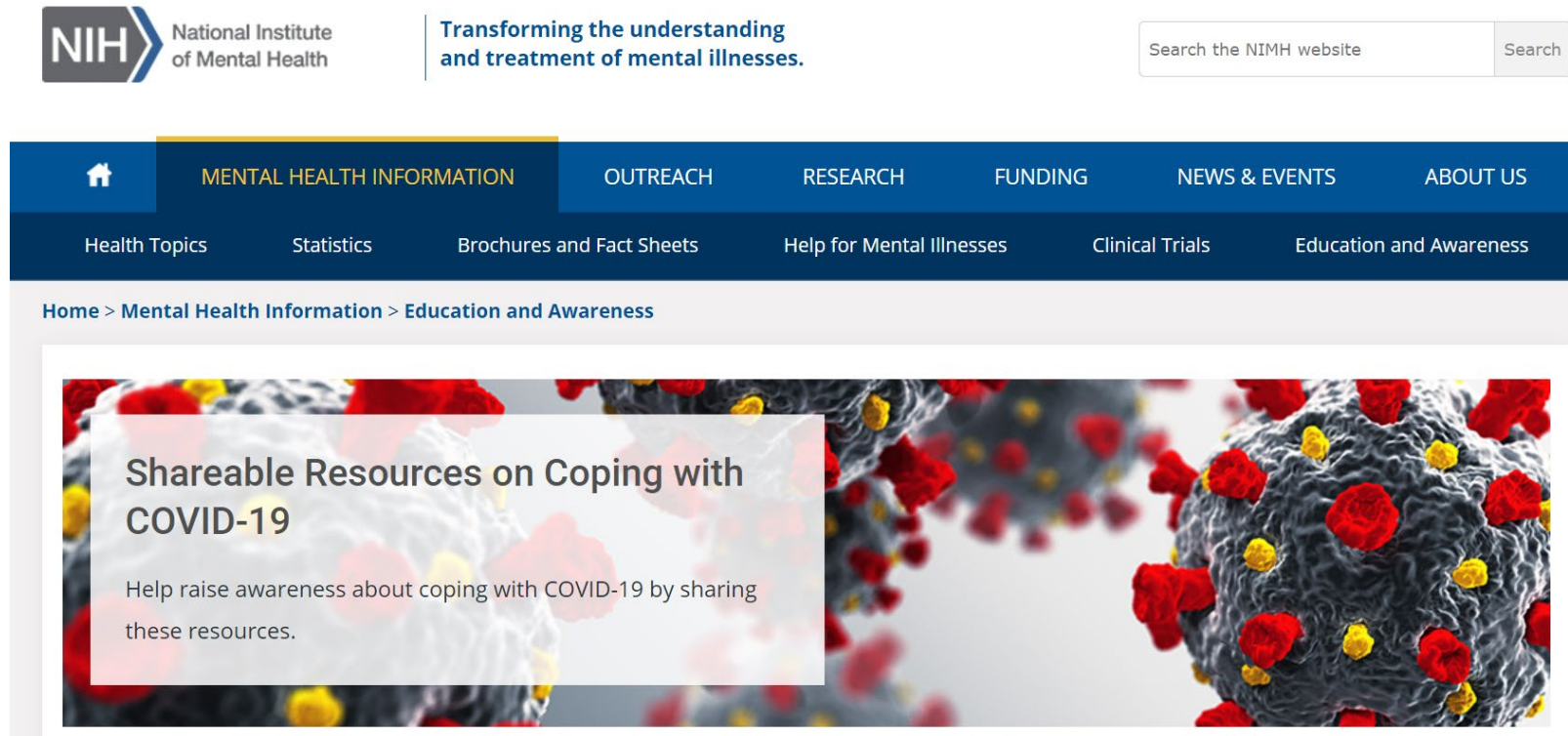


Coronavirus Resources

The materials below include general information about the coronavirus, resources for people with autism and other disabilities, guidance on how to manage stress and anxiety related to COVID-19, and links to IACC member federal department and agency information. For the latest public health information on COVID-19 from the CDC and federal partners, please see <https://www.coronavirus.gov>.

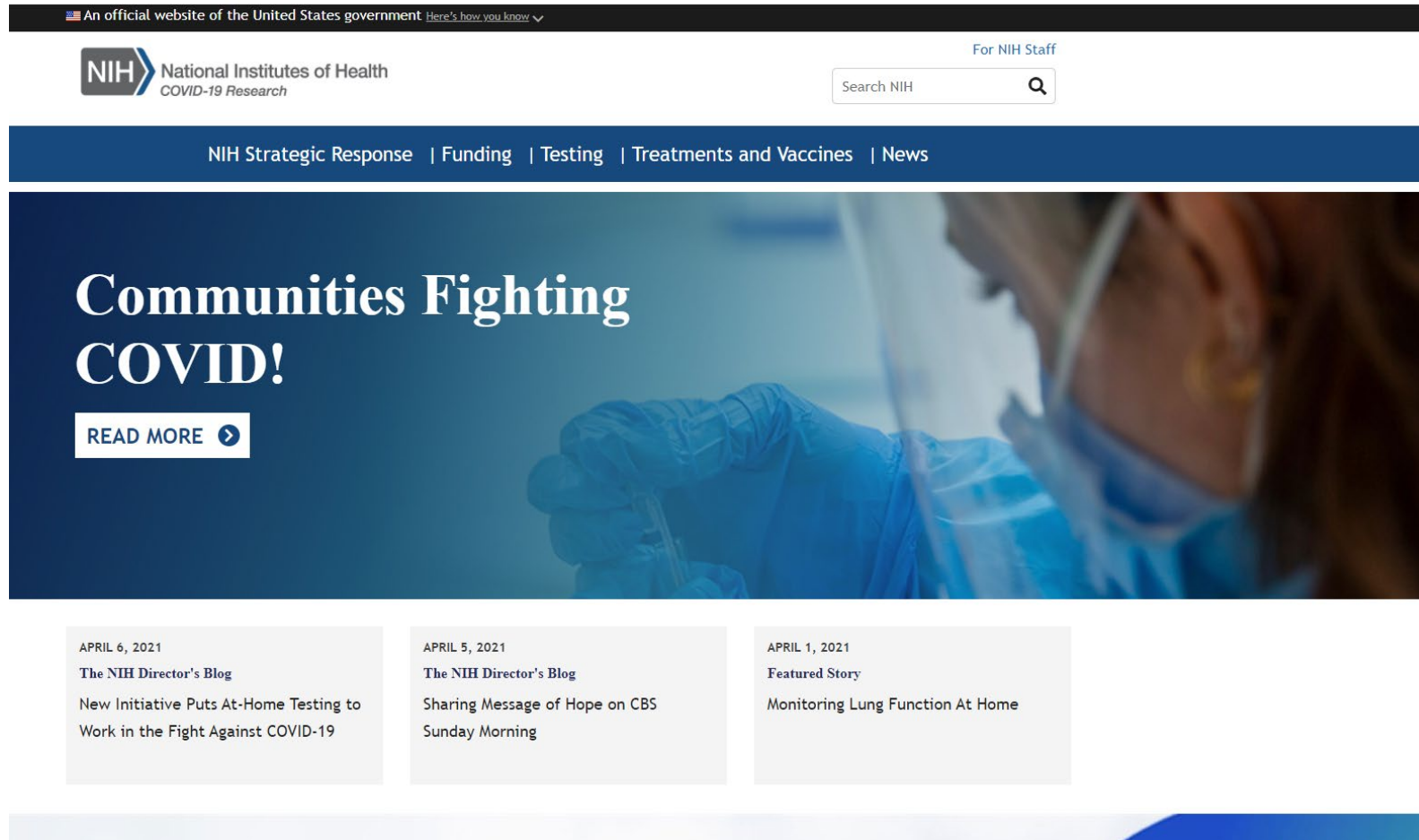
<https://iacc.hhs.gov/resources/coronavirus/>

NIMH Online COVID-19 Resources



<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/education-awareness/shareable-resources-on-coping-with-covid-19.shtml>

NIH Online COVID-19 Resources



<https://covid19.nih.gov/>