



Advocacy Without Borders

Annual Report 2025

Activities, Engagements, and Impact Summary



Who We Are

Advocacy Without Borders is a grassroots 501c3 non-profit organization that promotes everyday advocacy via meaningful community leadership and engagement, collaborative partnerships, social justice, and education.

When Advocacy Without Borders was created, a concept that our founder had long envisioned came to life - the simple yet critical need for all people to discover their "inner advocate." Though small and "grassroots," Advocacy Without Borders seeks to put disability justice into practice, particularly collective access, leadership of the most impacted; intersectionality; inherent worth of all people; and cross-movement solidarity.

Our work is driven by the belief that ALL voices matter, and that everyone deserves an opportunity to strive for growth and change.

Mission and Vision

Our mission is a simple yet important one: To encourage ALL people to make a difference, regardless of their differences.

We seek to amplify perspectives of communities such as individuals from marginalized racial and gender groups, youth, survivors, people with disabilities, and historically minoritized and/or underrepresented identities.

Advocacy Without Borders envisions a world where everyone has the opportunity to strive for growth and change, regardless of their background or circumstances. We are dedicated to meaningful community engagement, social justice, education, and collaboration.

Our vision is rooted in principles of intersectionality, disability justice, neurodiversity, and radical inclusion, seeking to amplify the perspectives of marginalized communities and foster a world where all perspectives are valued.

Advocacy Without Borders' Programs: An Overview

- **Community-Engaged Research & Advisory Participation**

Ongoing participation in advisory boards, community advisory boards (CABs), executive committees, and expert panels supporting autism, disability, health equity, and early childhood intervention research initiatives.

- **Autism, Neurodiversity, and Disability Advocacy**

Active involvement in autism and disability-focused networks, including recurring meetings, strategic planning sessions, and advisory roles addressing access, healthcare, and inclusion.

- **Intersectionality Initiatives**

Sustained engagement in various committees, justice-focused projects, and intersectional initiatives addressing the intersection of multiply marginalized identities (race, socioeconomic status, gender, disability, etc.) and related health disparities.

- **Public Education, Training, and Speaking Engagements**

Development and delivery of keynotes, presentations, workshops, panels, training, and lectures at conferences, institutes, summits, universities, and community events.

- **Knowledge Production and Dissemination**

Active involvement in scholarly as well as community-centered knowledge creation and translation, including manuscript development, editorial teams, peer review, and various dissemination activities for a range of audiences (laypersons, clinicians, and investigators).

- **Community Partnerships and Collaborative Projects**

Continued collaboration with nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, advocacy networks, and community groups through joint planning, co-hosted events, and shared initiatives.

- **Media, Communications, and Public Dialogue**

Participation in podcast recordings, interviews, webinars, and journalistic engagements to contribute to public conversations on autism, disability, and related topics.

- **Mutual Aid and Material Support**

Provision of microgrants as well as funds paid on behalf of struggling community members for short-term housing for homeless individuals and families; utilities assistance, meals/groceries, medication, diapers, clothing, school supplies, and transportation for disabled and indigent Americans, particularly those located in southern states.

Executive Summary of 2025 Annual Report

The report reflects a highly engaged year of leadership across research collaborations, executive and advisory roles, policy committees, invited speaking and media contributions with academic, nonprofit, and public-sector partners, scholarly and creative output, and mutual aid, material support, and referrals for disenfranchised and homeless families. Advocacy Without Borders' work spanned major research networks and projects alongside board and advisory service, conference presentations, and equity-focused community initiatives, demonstrating sustained national impact and cross-sector collaboration.

Although our organization is small, we work hard each day to make meaningful contributions that impact the communities we serve. We are immensely proud of our 2025 accomplishments, which include:

- 101 unique organizational collaborators
- Fifty-two research/scientific convenings and collaborations
- Forty-three distinct board and/or committee commitments
- Twenty presentations/panels/speaking engagements
- Twelve publications and/or media appearances
- Six student/youth mentorships
- Six individual families and four organizations serving families received mutual aid/material support in the form of microgrants to help them transition out of homelessness and/or overcome unexpected financial difficulty

Select examples from each of these categories are featured throughout the remaining pages of this annual report to provide greater insight into our work this year. Where applicable, hyperlinks are provided to augment the written description(s).

Additional documents (i.e., copies of some of the publications referenced) are available as supplemental appendices upon request. To obtain these items, please email admin@advocacywithoutborders.org. The documents will be sent as PDF attachments or as a Google Drive link.

2025 Research-Related Convenings & Scientific Collaborations: 52

2025 was another active year of community participatory research (new as well as continuing). Project activities including community engagement, collaborative work, investigator meetings, trial engagement initiatives, study design, and related tasks were conducted across multi-institution partnerships, a few of which are highlighted below.

- [Can You Hear Us Now? Engaging Adults with IDD in Health Research Rehabilitation Research and Training Center \(RRTC\)](#). **Role(s):** [Study Investigator](#) & [Research Expert Experience Panel \(REEP\)](#). (National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research [Ohio State University Nisonger Center])
 - “Can You Hear Us Now?” Engaging Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Health Research is a national center seeking to improve long-term health and quality of life for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), including groups who tend to be underrepresented in research, by developing accessible health measures, identifying mental health prevalence, and creating tailored psychotherapy interventions. The project emphasizes inclusive research practices and outputs, such as validated tools, treatment manuals, and educational resources.
- [Empower EI Project](#). **Role(s):** Co-Investigator; Community Co-Lead. (Northwestern University)
 - Empower EI: Comparing Early Intervention Approaches to Improve Communication in Toddlers with Developmental Delays is a research initiative funded by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI). The project evaluates early intervention strategies to strengthen communication outcomes for toddlers with developmental delays and to equip families with evidence-based information and resources. Study findings will inform caregivers, early intervention therapists, service coordinators, and policymakers, support more effective service delivery and contribute to improved long-term communication and health outcomes for children.
- [Advancing the Quality of Health Care Transition for Black Autistic Adolescent Girls Project](#). **Role:** Consultant. (National Health Care Transition Resource Center [Family Voices] via WITH Foundation funding)
 - The “Black Autistic Girls” project engaged Black women self-advocates and family advocates to develop and disseminate educational materials about barriers to diagnostic supports for Black girls and women with autism, as well as recommendations to address the unique needs of this intersectional population across the lifespan.
- [Adapting and Testing a Novel Method of Engagement in Research: Centering Autistic Perspectives in Behavioral Intervention Discussions Project](#). **Role:** Leadership Team. (Drexel University)
 - Centering Autistic Perspectives in Behavioral Intervention Discussions (CAPBID) is a Science of Engagement Award examining different community engagement approaches for bringing together autistic people, Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) providers, and other members of the autism community to advance a shared equitable dialogue around research priorities for ABA-related research. One approach will be based on existing transformative and restorative justice methods and frameworks co-developed with researchers and community members. CAPBID utilizes a community-driven participatory research framework incorporating autistic leadership in all aspects of the project.

2025 Board, Advisory, Executive and Committee Engagements: 43

In 2025, Advocacy Without Borders was active in executive leadership, advisory committee service, organizational strategy participation, international editorial work, and public health/policy roles. Several of these are highlighted below.

- [Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee \(IACC\)](#) is the Federal Advisory Committee advises the US Secretary of Health and Human Services on matters related to autism. IACC also coordinates all federal autism efforts within the US. Role: [Public Member](#)
- [Autism in Adulthood Journal](#) is a peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal advancing research, practice, and policy focused on the lives of autistic adults across the lifespan. Centering autistic perspectives, the journal publishes scholarships that inform inclusive approaches to health, employment, community living, and systems of change. **Role:** [Editorial Board Member](#)
- [Institute for Exceptional Care \(IEC\)](#) is a national nonprofit dedicated to improving healthcare for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) by partnering with individuals with lived experience, families, and healthcare professionals to transform how care is taught, delivered, and paid for. IEC's innovative programs, advocacy, and collaboration drive systems-level change, centering the community's priorities and needs for safer, higher-quality care. **Role:** [Board Member](#)
- [Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network \(AWN\)](#) is a national nonprofit that fosters community, support, and resources for autistic women, girls, nonbinary people, and others with marginalized gender identities. **Role:** [Board Member](#)
- [Foundations for Divergent Minds \(FDM\)](#) is a nonprofit rooted in the principles of disability justice, led by racially diverse, multiply neurodivergent autistic individuals. The organization advances equity, access, and fulfilled lives for neurodivergent people through inclusive, practical, and affirming programming, education, and resources for individuals, families, professionals, and communities worldwide. **Role:** [Board Member](#)
- [The Color of Autism Foundation](#) is a national nonprofit dedicated to expanding autism awareness, support, and services within Black communities and other communities of color. The Foundation works to address disparities in access to resources and ensure that autistic individuals and their families from diverse backgrounds are seen, supported, and empowered. **Role:** Board Member
- [Kind Theory](#) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting acceptance, understanding, and inclusivity for autistic people and other neurodivergent individuals through community-centered education, advocacy, and support. amplifying lived experience, fostering respectful dialogue, and advancing neurodiversity-affirming practices that build kind, equitable, and connected communities. **Role:** [Board Member](#)
- [All Neurotypes](#) is an organization dedicated to building inclusive and sensory friendly communities, celebrating neurodivergent communication, offering positive supports for neurodivergent individuals and other communities with shared goals, and promoting access to affirming healthcare resources. **Role:** [Board Member](#)

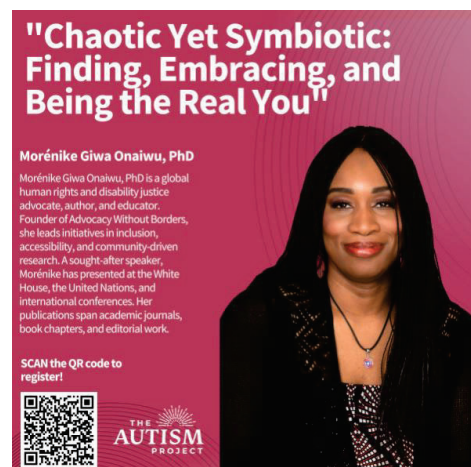
2025 Board, Advisory, Executive & Committee Engagements: 43 (continued from previous page)

- [Disability Philanthropy Forum](#) is a national initiative committed to transforming philanthropic practices so that disability is fully included as a priority across funding, policy, and grantmaking. By centering the voices and leadership of disabled people and advancing equity-driven values, the Forum works to increase investments in disability rights, inclusion, and community-defined priorities. **Role:** Advisory Board Member
- [National Center for Disability and Pregnancy Research](#): Housed within the [Lurie Institute for Disability Policy](#) at Brandeis University, this center conducts multidisciplinary research about reproduction, pregnancy, and disability, including reproductive health, sex education, prenatal health, childbirth, interactions with obstetricians, and support networks. **Role:** [Advisory Board Member](#)
- [Individuals with IDD Engaged, Aligned, and Leading: Outcomes That Matter \(IDDEAL\)](#) is a collaborative IEC and Augusta University project that seeks to develop consensus on what health and life outcomes are the highest priority for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD), identify corresponding quality measures, and determine how clinicians, payers, and regulators can support those outcomes in order to create a detailed plan that helps measure, improve, and ensure better healthcare for people with IDD. **Role:** Advisory Council Member
- [Carrie Buck Distinguished Fellowship](#): Funded by the Ford Foundation and housed within the [Lurie Institute for Disability Policy](#) at Brandeis University, this fellowship is intended for activists, scholars, and community organizers with disabilities whose work draws national attention to systemic ableism in reproductive health policy. **Role:** [Advisory Board Member](#)
- [National Research Center for Parents with Disabilities](#): Housed within the [Lurie Institute for Disability Policy](#) at Brandeis University, this multi-year collaborative research and advocacy project conducts research and provides training and technical assistance to improve the lives of parents with disabilities and their families. **Role:** [Advisory Board Member](#)
- [Coalition of Autism Scientists](#) is a collective of autism researchers committed to advancing rigorous, evidence-based science. The Coalition promotes research integrity, counters misinformation, and supports policies that strengthen autism research and benefit the autism community. **Role:** [Autism Researcher](#)
- [Autism Intervention Research Network on Physical Health \(AIR-P\)](#) is an interdisciplinary research network led by the University of California, Los Angeles that focuses on improving the physical health and overall well-being of autistic individuals across the lifespan. The AIR-P brings together scientists, clinicians, and community stakeholders to support intervention research that addresses gaps in healthcare, enhances life expectancy and quality of care, and promotes inclusive research practices that reflect the priorities of autistic individuals and their families. **Role:** [Member](#)

2025 Presentations, Panels, Webinars, and Speaking Engagements: 20

Numerous conference presentations, webinars, panels, lectures, trainings, and discussion events were completed in 2025. A few of these are highlighted below.

- Webinar, The Autism Project: "[Chaotic Yet Symbiotic: Finding, Embracing, and Being the Real You](#)" (A free live webinar exploring authenticity, inclusion, and identity within the neurodiversity and disability communities.) **Role:** Keynote Presenter.
 - [The Autism Project](#) is a Hub of Hope that has connected individuals on the autism spectrum, their families, and professionals to resources, education, and support since 1997, offering accessible training, social skills groups, summer camp, and family navigation services in Rhode Island and beyond.
- Webinar, [The Century Foundation: Why Connecting Disability Justice and Reproductive Justice Matters](#). **Role:** [Speaker](#)
 - [The Century Foundation](#) is a progressive, independent, nonpartisan public policy think tank that conducts evidence-based research and develops solutions to foster opportunities, reduce inequality, and promote security both domestically and internationally. It seeks to inform citizens, guide policymakers, and drive policy change across areas such as education, economic equity, health care, and democratic rights to improve people's lives and shape more equitable government action.
- Webinar, [The Kroussaw Foundation](#). **Role:** [Speaker](#)
 - [The Kroussaw Foundation](#) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering underserved individuals and communities by fostering personal growth, educational attainment, and holistic development. Through programs organized around the pillars of Discover, Educate, and Transform, the foundation offers initiatives in life skills, college and career readiness, health and wellness, and community empowerment that help participants realize their full potential and contribute positively to their communities. Over the years, The Kroussaw Foundation has worked with partner schools and community groups to expand access to supportive educational experiences and opportunities for self-discovery and growth.



2025 Mutual Aid and Material Support:

Six individual families and four organizations serving families received mutual aid/material support in the form of microgrants to help them transition out of homelessness and/or overcome unexpected financial difficulty.

- Provision of emergency short-term lodging and household items for homeless single mother and her children ages 4, 6, 8, and 9 years old
- Provision of emergency short-term lodging and household items for homeless disabled single father and minor children
- Rental and food assistance for homeless disabled single mother and minor child
- Provision of funds for disabled single mother and minor children.
- Provision of funds to disabled unemployed father and minor child
- Provision of short-term transitional lodging for homeless father recently released from incarceration as a "stop gap" while he awaited placement in a housing program
- Support for education and awareness activities promoting substance use recovery led by disabled veteran and volunteers
- Support for ongoing volunteer services, leadership, and philanthropy
- Provision of funds for groceries for struggling families to prevent hunger due to loss of Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits
- Provision of various forms of assistance to low income families (clothing, transportation, school supplies, etc.)



2025 Publications and Media Features: 12

Our knowledge-translation efforts continued to grow in 2025 with several collaborative publications, media interviews, podcast features, and other activities as highlighted below.

- *Obstetric Care and Pregnancy Health in Autistic Individuals and Those with Other Developmental Disabilities in an Integrated Health Care Setting in California* (peer reviewed article in *Autism in Adulthood Journal*, [DOI: 10.1089/aut.2024.0323](https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2024.0323))
- *Research Impacting and Involving Autistic Adults Should Be Trauma Informed* (peer reviewed article in *Autism in Adulthood Journal*, [DOI:10.1089/aut.2023.0200](https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2023.0200))
- *Guiding Principles and Research Priorities for Early Childhood Autism Therapy Research: Results of a Community-Engaged Project* (peer reviewed article in *Neurodiversity Journal*, [DOI: 10.1177/27546330251338419](https://doi.org/10.1177/27546330251338419))
- *Current Methods and Future Prospects in the Detection of Mental Distress in Individuals with Profound Intellectual and Multiple Disabilities* (peer reviewed article in *Journal of Developmental and Physical Issues*, [DOI: 10.1007/s10882-025-10036-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10882-025-10036-6))
- *Neurodiversity-Affirming Intersectional Approaches That Target Public Policy: Moving the Focus From Changing Individuals to Changing Systems of Power* (peer reviewed article in *Journal of Social Issues*, [DOI: 10.1111/JOSI.70042](https://doi.org/10.1111/JOSI.70042))
- *Inclusion Must Be Global, Decolonized, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, and Anti-Normative* (peer reviewed article in *Journal of Social Issues*, [DOI: 10.1111/JOSI.70045](https://doi.org/10.1111/JOSI.70045))
- [Neurodiversity Matters: Morénike Giwa Onaiwu on Antiracist Advocacy](#) (Podcast guest appearance, Qualitative Open Mic Podcast at King's College London: [Link to episode](#))
- [TIME: Autism feature](#): TIME: Autism is a special edition publication that examines autism through research, reporting, and personal stories. The issue explores diagnosis, treatment, and everyday experiences of autistic individuals and families, offering an accessible overview that helps broaden public understanding of autism.

2025 Memberships and Awards: 7

Our 2025 organizational memberships and professional recognitions reflect our credibility, leadership, and sustained commitment to advocacy, inclusion, and community impact.

Award (1)

- **Community Autism Excellence Award, Autism Urban Connections Incorporated:** In commemoration of a decade of service, AUC Inc., a Pennsylvania-based nonprofit that supports Black families raising children on the autism spectrum through education, advocacy, and community-centered support hosted the Community Autism Excellence Awards in 2025 to honor individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to AUC's mission and the broader autism community. Together with other members of the Black autism community, recognition was given through the Empowering Advocacy Award, which was named after our organization's founder.

Memberships (6)

- [Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Honor Society](#) is an international honor society for science and engineering. Among the world's oldest and largest scientific organizations, Sigma Xi has more than 125 years of distinguished service advancing science, research, and societal impact. Its membership includes scientists and engineers whose work spans a wide range of scientific and technological disciplines. Role: Full Member
- [International Society for Autism Research \(INSAR\)](#) is a nonprofit scientific organization dedicated to advancing autism research worldwide. INSAR is governed by an elected, volunteer Board of Directors and supported by committees that oversee and advance the Society's mission. Role: Member
- [International Network of Personal Meaning \(INPM\)](#) is a global community dedicated to promoting meaning, purpose, and well-being across diverse cultures and disciplines. Through education, research, conferences, and public engagement, INPM supports individuals, practitioners, and scholars in applying meaning-centered approaches to enhance personal resilience, mental health, and social connection. Role: Member
- [Black Empowerment in Autism Network \(BEAM\)](#) advances equity in autism research, policy, and practice by centering the voices, leadership, and lived experiences of Black autistic individuals and their families. Through community-engaged research, advocacy, and cross-sector collaboration, BEAM works to address systemic disparities and promote more inclusive, culturally responsive approaches to autism services and supports. Role: Member
- [The Society for the Improvement of Psychological Science \(SIPS\)](#): An organization committed to strengthening the quality and credibility of psychological research. Through community engagement, education, and advocacy, SIPS promotes transparent and trustworthy scientific practices that improve how psychology is conducted and applied. Role: Member
- [International Leadership Association \(ILA\) Global Network](#): Connects scholars, practitioners, and organizations from around the world who are engaged in leadership research, education, and practice. Through shared resources, convenings, and collaboration, the network supports inclusive leadership development and advances solutions to complex social and organizational challenges. Role: Member

2025 Student and Youth Mentoring: 6

Our organization continued to support direct student mentoring and academic partnerships in 2025. This includes the following student/fellowship engagements highlighted below.

- A.S. (Graduate student), New York University (New York, USA)
- O.A. (Undergraduate student), Lagos State University (Lagos, Nigeria)
- T.T. (Undergraduate student), University of Texas (Texas, USA)
- S.S. (Undergraduate student), University of Houston (Texas, USA)
- J.L. (High school student), public school (Georgia, USA)
- S.H. (High school student), public school (Texas, USA)

2025 Organizational Collaborators: 101

This year Advocacy Without Borders worked with a total of 101 unique organizations engaged across research, governance, academic, media, and community collaboration domains, including those newly initiated in 2025, ongoing long-term partnerships, and short-term and/or event-specific collaborations. A few of these are highlighted below.

Academic & Research Institutions



Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Health and Function
for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



Federal & Government-Affiliated Entities



Nonprofit & Advocacy Organizations



Philanthropic & Policy Organizations



Research Networks & Collaboratives

