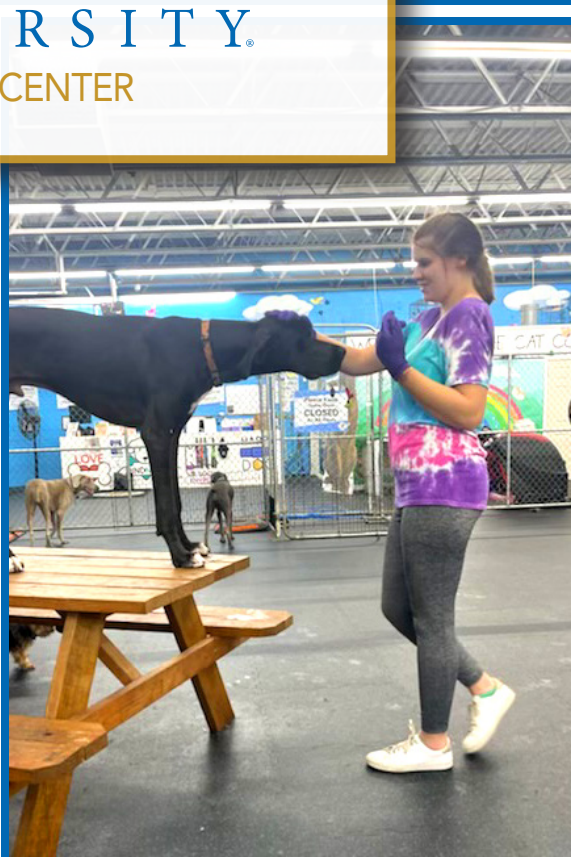




MISERICORDIA
UNIVERSITY®
AUTISM CENTER





The Autism Center at **Misericordia University (MU)** acts as a resource for family's clinicians, practitioners, and caregivers. The Center and its website, www.misericordia.edu/autism, provide a guide to clinical services at Misericordia University, community resources, current best practices, and helpful information.

The Mission of the Autism Center is to educate and train the public, as well as individuals and families with autism, about aspects of neurodiverse populations and engagement to create a more equitable and merciful community. Additionally, we strive to assist neurodiverse individuals to acquire life and employment skills leading to developing their full potential.

The Autism Center is part of the **College of Health Sciences and Education** and is located on Misericordia University's lower campus at:
50 Lake St. Dallas, PA 18612

FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THE AUTISM CENTER:

✉ **Email us:** autism@misericordia.edu

f **Follow us on Facebook:** Autism Center at Misericordia University

📷 **Like us on Instagram:** [mu_autismcenter](https://www.instagram.com/mu_autismcenter)

📺 **Subscribe to our YouTube page:** Autism Center at Misericordia University

☎ **Feel free to call us:** Monday – Friday | 8 am – 4:30 pm | [570-674-8200](tel:570-674-8200)

AVAILABLE RESOURCES AT THE AUTISM CENTER:

LENDING LIBRARY

Serves as a place for professionals, parents and caregivers to borrow items for Sensory, Audio/Visual, Developmental, Tactile, and Body Movement for both fun and educational purposes.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

ART Sessions

SWIM Sessions

Reading Program

Video Modeling resource link - sponsored by MU's OT Department

MU Best Buddies Chapter - hosts events for the college-age Autism community

Therapeutic Table Top Role-Playing Group (TTRPG) - these games are utilized as a unique delivery system for working on individual goals.

Events are accompanied by Misericordia University students.

Thank you to the AllOne Foundation and S.A.F.E. organization for their continued support of the Autism Center.



We are proud members of:

PIHEC - Pennsylvania Inclusive Higher Education Consortium

ACCE - Autism Collaboration Centers of Excellence



INTEGRATED STUDIES PROGRAM (ISP)

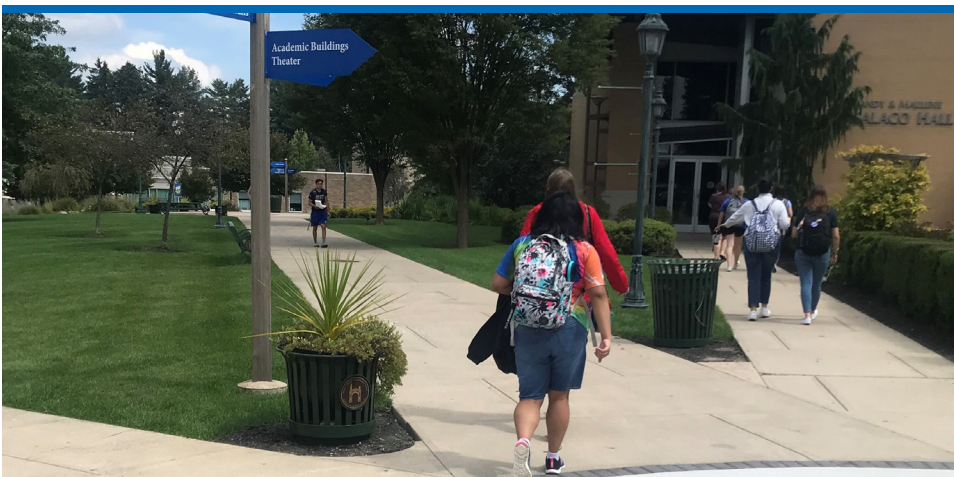
Misericordia University offers an inclusive, post-secondary certificate program designed specifically for students with moderate Autism, with or without co-morbid disorders, and Intellectual Disabilities. The Integrated Studies Program is a full-time, college-based, 2-year program designed for students between the ages of 18–26 and gives prospective students access to a full-time inclusive and supported program of study.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND OUTCOMES:

Students will participate in college courses and experiences that will allow them to work towards living an independent life. The program will provide meaningful courses and seminars that will support their transition, education, and social skills development. A choice of several pathways will be made available for the students to select including liberal arts, early childhood education, and vocational/employment opportunity exploration. The program aims to prepare each student for gainful employment.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:

The program will require 40–60 credit hours that are a mixture of inclusive courses, including the first-year experience, audited courses, as well as internship and job shadowing opportunities. Additional seminars will be provided to support college life and socialization. Students are enrolled as full-time, non-degree-seeking students, with all the rights and responsibilities of a degree-seeking student. Students in the program have access to institutional facilities, consistent with other students, which supports the achievement of their goals. This program is designed to provide excellent opportunities in education, career development, and social participation within an inclusive academic setting. The Comprehensive Post Secondary Transition (CTP) program is approved by the Department of Education. The program is based on Think College standards and created with support from the PA Inclusive Higher Education Consortium and other successful programs.



CURRICULUM:

All students will take required 3-5 liberal arts courses (9–15 credits). Individuals may also select a full pathway of liberal arts courses and or early childhood courses.

For Example:

- TED 100 Education Seminar
- TED 190 Education Seminar Field
- ECE 110 Introduction to Early childhood
- TED 131 Cultural Awareness
- TED 191 Freshman Field Exploration
- COM 102 Intro to Mass Communications
- HPE 128 Intro to Exercise Science
- ENG 120 Theater Production
- FA 103 Fundamentals of Drawing and Composition
- FA 124 Fundamentals of Painting
- FA 133 Fine Art Photography
- CPS 101 Introduction to Programming
- MTH 115 Basic Statistics

All students will take courses on campus. Students will have the opportunity to audit courses in an inclusive environment with other MU students. An academic policy will be created by the post-secondary certificate program and will confer with the faculty of such courses to work in collaboration with course instructors/chairs to modify the course syllabi and assignments so that no additional burden is placed on the faculty. Students will have the option of taking courses for audited purposes. Satisfactory academic progress will be determined by the professor in accordance with Misericordia policy. Students seeking this path will need to fill out a part-time admissions application once enrolled in the Misericordia Integrated Studies program.

Students involved in The Autism Center have access to **Misericordia University**, a Catholic liberal arts institution founded in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy. The university cultivates a transformational educational experience that promotes intellectual curiosity and critical thinking in a supportive and inclusive community, inspiring all students to engage in a life of service and global citizenship.

SOME FAST FACTS ABOUT MISERICORDIA:

3
ACADEMIC
COLLEGES
OVER **> 50**
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

26 **SPORTS** **FOR** Men & Women
THAT COMPETE IN NCAA DIII

\$ **LOWEST TUITION**
for a private institution
in NEPA;
100 %
OF INCOMING
STUDENTS RECEIVE
FINANCIAL AID

ADMISSIONS CRITERIA:

All students admitted to the Misericordia Integrated Studies Program must:

- Be between the ages of 18–26 at the start of the program.
- Have a documented diagnosis of ASD and may have an additional comorbid diagnosis.
- Demonstrate interest in pursuing higher education at Misericordia University.
- Demonstrate interest in preparing for and desiring meaningful employment.
- Successfully completed high school or secondary institution with a diploma, GED, special education diploma, and/or certificate.
- Have either received or would have been eligible to receive services under IDEA (i.e., had an IEP/504).
- Demonstrate sufficient emotional stability, safety, and independent living skills to participate with minimal support in all aspects of the Misericordia Integrated Studies coursework and campus environment.
- Have basic computer and literacy skills and be able to complete assignments and navigate the campus independently.
- Have the potential to successfully achieve individual and course goals with minimal support.
- Be able to appropriately participate in 75-minute classes with necessary accommodations in place to function independently in social situations.
- Be able to accept and follow campus rules and policies and behave respectfully towards others without supervision.
- Have and be responsible for their own cell phone.
- Highly desired: enrolled in county supports coordination/OVR/waiver at the start of the program.

ADMISSION PROCESS:

Misericordia's Integrated Studies Program will be accepting students each Fall Semester. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. In addition to a completed application form for admission, students will be required to submit a personal statement including:

- Describe the world you come from — for example, your family, community, or school, and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.
- Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, or contribution that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are? PLEASE NOTE: Personal statements can be submitted in a word document, audio, or video format. Prospective students must also include documentation of disability.
- Most recent Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Psychological-Educational or Neuropsychological Evaluation (by a licensed professional and dated within 2 years of your application date).

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

- Resume or summary of work/volunteer history.
- Official high school transcripts and most recent IEP/504 and (if applicable) IEP and summary of performance.
- Completed Student Interest Questionnaire on the application, or email your response as a video or PowerPoint attachment.
- Two recommendation letters from current/former teacher or employer and/ or member of the community (coach, mentor, etc.).
- One family member recommendation.

ONCE ACCEPTED:

A person-centered planning meeting will take place prior to the start of the semester involving the student, parents/guardians, program staff, and support team. Students receive additional support from academic coaches who can attend courses with the students and mentors who can assist the students in their academic work, not in the courses.

FINANCIAL AID:

Misericordia Integrated Studies is a Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP). Students should complete the FAFSA during their admissions process to determine if they are eligible for Federal Pell Grants, Supplemental Education Grants, or Federal Work-Study. Students may apply funds from PA Medicaid waiver funding toward tuition and educational support; and/or apply funds from OVR. Additional scholarships may be available through:

- Ruby's Rainbow
- O'Neill Tabani Enrichment Fund
- Other local, community-based organizations

Think College has a helpful resource on paying for college, and program staff is available to advise on this process to ensure that the program is financially accessible for any accepted student.



THE AUTISM FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (ALL PROGRAM)

The Autism Center at Misericordia University offers the Autism for Lifelong Learning Program (ALL). The ALL Program is designed to provide Supported Employment, Competitive Employment, School-Based Transition Services, and Community Support Services to individuals with Autism in Luzerne and Wyoming counties.

The primary goal is to enable the participants involved in the program to ultimately obtain employment to the fullest extent of their respective abilities. We believe people with a primary diagnosis of Autism and/or dually diagnosed should make the same wage as everyone else and that a job is an important part of an inclusive life. To that end, we strive to find unique and sustainable jobs, customizable employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities for individuals with Autism and/or dually diagnosed so that they can be contributing members of their community.

The following services provided are as follows:

SCHOOL-BASED TRANSITION: SUMMARY:

The ALL Program offers school-based transition services to students ages 14-21 in a group setting at local schools. The goal of the school-based transition program is to assist school-aged students to develop career-ready skills for an inclusive workplace environment and to encourage a person-centered approach to post-secondary vocations.

PROCESS:

After OVR makes a referral to the ALL Program, schools select the curriculum topics that best meet the needs of their students. Curriculum topics offered by the ALL Program include independent living skills, job exploration, self-advocacy, and workplace readiness. The ALL Program meets with classroom teachers to determine the needs of each class and builds a curriculum specifically designed for each classroom. A facilitator leads the instruction of the curriculum for a 12-week session within the school district. Each curriculum topic includes hands-on, student-centered activities in a group setting with a culminating project after the session. The lessons are aligned with an OVR-approved curriculum and Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills standards.

CURRICULUM TOPICS SUMMARY:

- **Independent living skills:** This curriculum focuses on fostering a sense of the skills needed to prosper within the community.
- **Job exploration:** This curriculum focuses on the readiness skills needed to sustain gainful employment within a community.
- **Self-advocacy:** This curriculum focuses on self-determination and relating to others.
- **Workplace readiness:** This curriculum focuses on the skills needed to find an employment opportunity.

COMMUNITY-BASED WORK ASSESSMENT (CBWA): SUMMARY:

Provides up to 20 hours of an assessment of the participant's skills and abilities and interests to perform various types of work within three different job sites of his or her interests with a Job Coach. The initial 2 hours begin with an in-person discussion of the types of jobs the participant would like to possibly pursue. The participant would then voluntarily perform 3 or 4 of these types of jobs for approximately 2-3 hours each in each setting. While performing the jobs, the Job Coach observes the participant's skills and abilities. A full assessment report is provided to the OVR based on our findings. In most cases, this leads to additional employment services.

JOB SHADOWING: SUMMARY:

Provides the participants to observe up to 15 hours in various job sites to determine what type of job interests them with the support of a Job Coach. The opportunity helps explain the job tasks analysis to help them understand all that goes into performing the job correctly. This can be done before the CBWA, Paid Work Experience, and Supported Employment so that the participant is more comfortable with the type of job they want to pursue in the future.

PAID WORK EXPERIENCE (PWE): SUMMARY:

(PWE) provides between 40-90 hours within a community-integrated work setting where a participant will have the ability to interact with other employees and participants supported by a Job Coach. This experience creates an opportunity for a participant to perform work duties at a community-integrated work setting to connect experiences to real-life work activities and future career opportunities. The PWE participant is hired through Misericordia University. OVR reimburses the provider once the services are provided to the participant. In some cases, the PWE can lead to a permanent job with the employer after the 90 hours of PWE are completed.



SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PLAN (SESP):**SUMMARY:**

(SESP) includes the participant, and ALL Program staff, and may also include any other members of the participant's support system to develop the SESP. The SESP includes a descriptive account of the participant's strengths, abilities, preferences, and interests and are all considered when choosing businesses to contact for an opportunity for the participant to complete their service.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (SE)**Job Development Phase 1**

Job development activities, provided by the ALL Program, are intended to continue until the participant starts a job that matches their employment goal. Phase 1 activities performed by the ALL Program include job development to assist the participant in obtaining employment. The ALL Program may assist with resume preparation, application completion, the interview process, and any other activity that prepares the participant, employment site, and/or employer for the participant in obtaining employment.

Job Placement Phase II

Job Placement services are provided up to the first 40 hours of employment. Services provided under Phase II are direct, line-of-sight job coaching provided to the participant. Among other SE services provided during Phase II, orientation to the job is provided by the ALL Program to assist the participant in understanding job duties and employer expectations. The ALL Program provides intensive, line-of-sight coaching to ensure a positive adjustment to time management, co-worker relations, and job tasks. The ALL Program must record all time spent providing the line-of-sight job coaching to calculate job stability.

Eight Week Job Maintenance Payment Phase III

Job Maintenance services are direct, line-of-sight job coaching provided to the participant. Services should continue to assist the participant in understanding job duties and employer expectations. Natural supports should be developed so that the participant can rely on natural supports rather than the job coach. Ongoing communication with the participant, the employer, VRC, and other supports should be occurring to ensure success.

Job Stabilization Payment Phase IV

Job stabilization occurs when the participant's work performance reaches a level acceptable to the employer, and the job coaching and related ongoing support services have diminished to the level necessary to maintain the participant in competitive integrated employment. Typically, the acceptable level of work performance occurs when the participant can work 80% of the scheduled hours independently. Therefore, ALL Program staff is only required to be on-site for 20% or less of the participants' work time. It is expected that natural supports will be established and the ALL Program will be able to fade from the line of sight coaching completely. There may be situations in which the participant has not yet achieved stability on the job. In these instances, the participant, VRC, and ALL Program staff must agree on the participant's maximum

level of stability. The maximum level of stability occurs when a participant maintains a consistent level of support for ten (10) working days with no more than ten (10) percent variation. Reports from the ALL Program must indicate the percentage of the line-of-sight coaching provided throughout the case.

Case Closure Payment Phase V

A participant's case meets the criteria for case closure when the participant has been employed for 90 calendar days past job stabilization or their maximum level of stabilization. Line-of-sight job coaching services should be diminished to the level necessary for the participant to maintain job stability. The case may be closed when one of the following conditions occurs:

- A participant meets the definition of job stability with natural supports in place and no longer needs the line of sight job coaching from the ALL Program.
- A participant meets the definition of job stability but still needs line of sight job coaching to ensure vocational success and extended services (provided by OVR or alternative funding sources) are needed to ensure vocational success.
- A participant has met their maximum level of stability and extended services (provided by OVR or alternative funding sources) are needed to ensure vocational success.

EXTENDED SERVICES:**SUMMARY:**

Extended services occur when the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) has determined there is a need for OVR-funded intensive support beyond case closure. There may be situations in which the participant has not yet achieved stability on the job, or needs additional support to maintain employment. In these instances, OVR support may continue with extended SE services to support the participant as determined by the VRC and the participant, if there are no alternative funding sources.

JOB MENTORING:**SUMMARY:**

Job mentoring provides the participants to have the skills needed to perform the essential duties of the job but needs additional support to learn and maintain the job for up to 90 consecutive days with the support of a Job Coach. The participant will benefit from having a coach to mentor them during the job search process and within their first 90 days of employment to ensure job retention and stability. Job mentoring services are intended to be the least intrusive to the participant's work environment. Most mentoring services will be provided off-site, but may occasionally be on-site support.

The ALL Program is referral-based and receives referrals to provide services from The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) and The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). Individuals that have an open case with ODP or OVR are eligible for the ALL Program. If Employment Services is determined to be the best way to reach an individual's vocational goal then ODP/OVR would provide them with Employment Provider options. If the ALL Program is the chosen provider, the Supports Coordinator/ Vocation Rehabilitation Counselor will authorize the agreed-upon service and contact the ALL Program with the referral.

CONTACT US!



50 Lake St. Dallas, PA 18612



Email us: autism@misericordia.edu



570-674-8200

Monday – Friday | 8 am – 4:30 pm



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AND EDUCATION