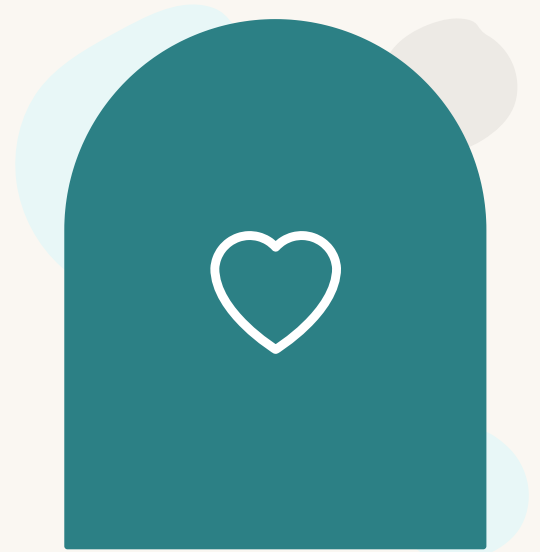


FOR VOLUNTEERS

Welcome to *the* *movement*

Thank you for volunteering with the Africa Autism Alliance.
Every campaign, programme and conversation you're part
of helps change the way Africa sees autism.



WHAT YOU'RE JOINING

A movement that speaks for every
individual who has been overlooked
because no one knew *what autism
looks like*.

- ✓ A movement that equips families with knowledge and hope, not just diagnoses and fear.
- ✓ A movement that walks alongside teachers, health workers and leaders as they learn new ways to see and support neurodiversity.
- ✓ A movement that believes Africa's future is richer, wiser and more humane when neurodiverse minds are included and allowed to flourish.

YOUR VOLUNTEER LEAD

Name

Phone or WhatsApp

Email

IN THIS GUIDE

- 1 What you'll do, and your first weeks
- 2 Talking about autism
- 3 Our code of conduct
- 4 Keeping children and families safe

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Four ways volunteers *make a difference*

What you do depends on what's happening near you and the time you can give. Your volunteer lead will match you to activities.



Advocacy

Speak up for inclusion in your community, place of worship, school, workplace and online. Share accurate information and challenge myths kindly.



Awareness campaigns

Help run campaigns and events, especially around World Autism Awareness Day on 2 April: staff information stands, share materials, and talk with the public.



Community programmes

Support seminars, workshops and family events: welcome guests, set up calm spaces, help things run smoothly.



Inclusive initiatives

Help schools, clinics, shops and public spaces take their first steps to becoming autism-inclusive, and introduce them to the Alliance.

YOUR FIRST WEEKS

Getting *started*

1

Meet your volunteer lead

Agree the activities you'll help with and the time you can give. Be honest – a little time, reliably given, is worth a lot.

2

Read the core pack

Start with About the Alliance and the Autism fact sheet. They give you the facts and the words to use.

3

Shadow an experienced volunteer

Join an event alongside someone who has done it before, and ask questions afterwards.

4

Read and sign the code of conduct

On page 4. Hand the signed page to your volunteer lead before your first activity with children or families.

TALKING ABOUT AUTISM

Three messages to *share everywhere*

1

Autism is a difference, not a disease.

It affects how people communicate and experience the world. It isn't anyone's fault, and it isn't a curse.

2

Small changes make a big difference.

A quieter waiting room, a patient answer, a visual timetable – everyday places can become inclusive.

3

Everyone can help.

Learn the facts, include autistic people, and bring your school, clinic or workplace into the Alliance.

QUESTIONS YOU'LL HEAR

You don't need to know everything. It's always fine to say "I don't know – let me find someone who does."

"Did the parents cause it?"

No. Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition. Nothing the parents did caused it, and blaming families only keeps children hidden.

"Can autism be cured?"

Autism isn't an illness. Understanding, support and the right environment help autistic people thrive. Be wary of anyone selling a cure.

"Do vaccines cause autism?"

No. The World Health Organization confirms vaccines don't cause autism.

"I think my child might be autistic. What should I do?"

Never diagnose. Give them the Early signs leaflet, encourage them to see a doctor or clinic, and show them the support directory on our website.

"How can my organisation get involved?"

Give them the Certification brochure, or point them to africaautismalliance.org/the-alliance/join.

"How do I talk about autistic people?"

Both "autistic person" and "person with autism" are used. Follow the person's own lead. The fact sheet lists words to avoid.

Code of conduct

When you volunteer, you represent the Africa Autism Alliance. I will:

- ✓ Treat everyone with respect, patience and kindness.
- ✓ Use the words in the Autism fact sheet, and avoid labels people haven't chosen.
- ✓ **Never give medical, diagnostic or legal advice.** I'll point people to qualified professionals.
- ✓ Keep what families tell me private, unless a child may be at risk.
- ✓ Not speak to journalists, or post on behalf of the Alliance, without my volunteer lead's approval.
- ✓ Not collect money or donations unless the Alliance has authorised it in writing.
- ✓ Tell my volunteer lead early if I can't keep a commitment.

Keeping children safe

Autistic children can find it harder to tell someone when something is wrong. We all share the duty to protect them. I will:

- ✓ Never be alone with a child out of sight of other adults.
- ✓ **Never photograph or film a child** without written permission from their parent or carer, and never share images without it.
- ✓ Not exchange phone numbers or social media with children.
- ✓ Ask before touching or helping with personal care, and respect a child's sensory needs.
- ✓ Never use physical restraint, except to stop immediate harm.

IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT A CHILD

Listen

Stay calm. Let the child speak in their own way and time.
Don't ask leading questions.

Don't promise secrecy

Explain kindly that you'll need to tell someone who can help.
Write down what you saw or heard.

Report the same day

Tell the safeguarding lead below. If a child is in immediate danger, call local emergency services first.

AT EVENTS

Make your own event autism-friendly

- ✓ Keep a quiet corner away from speakers and crowds.
- ✓ Tell guests what will happen and when, before they arrive.
- ✓ Don't expect eye contact, handshakes or hugs.

SAFEGUARDING LEAD

Name _____

Phone _____

I HAVE READ AND AGREE TO THIS CODE

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____