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# Leading Autism and Disability Organizations Call for Decision-Making Based on Quality Science and Compassion for the Autism Community

by Jess Davidson | Sep 24, 2025 | Press Release

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Monday, September 22, the US [Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.](#) [announced the department's actions to address what he called the "epidemic of autism."](#) The theories that Secretary Kennedy presented to the public demonstrate his continued disrespect for autistic people and follow a now-familiar pattern of citing debunked claims, demeaning people with disabilities, and spreading misinformation about vaccines and autism.

The White House also held a press conference on Monday where they raised unfounded concerns about acetaminophen as a potential cause of autism. Acetaminophen is commonly sold under the brand name Tylenol. The President went as far as to explicitly tell pregnant people “don’t take Tylenol,” repeated incorrect information about the history of the prevalence of autism, and called for several changes to the childhood vaccine schedule and to the ingredients of vaccines.

These unfounded and unscientific claims that Tylenol causes autism endanger the lives of pregnant people and go against [the advice of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#). Acetaminophen is widely considered the safest option for pregnant people when it comes to over-the-counter medication that is needed to treat pain or fevers, and it is certainly better than letting a fever go untreated. Autism existed long before Tylenol was sold. Similarly, the administration’s claims about autism and vaccines are dangerous to children, immunocompromised people, and to our nation’s public health more broadly. Three decades of scientific research have repeatedly shown that vaccines and their ingredients do not cause autism. Claims that autism is “preventable” by taking—or not taking—certain medications are not supported by scientific consensus and serve only to perpetuate stigma against autistic people.

HHS leadership also announced approval of the drug leucovorin to “treat” autism. Limited evidence exists studying the effects of leucovorin on autistic people. The studies that do exist have small sample sizes and are not a substitute for large, robust clinical trials. Approval of this drug as an autism “treatment” at this time exposes autistic people to a range of unknown risks. Autism is complex and multifactorial, presenting differently from person to person. Autistic people need self-directed supports and services tailored to them based on their functional needs, not a one-size-fits-all solution.

Autistic people deserve respect and support. There are many policy and program changes HHS could pursue that would materially improve the lives of autistic people and our families. Avenues to provide suggestions have been limited. The only federal body specifically designed to include engagement from the autism community, the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC), has not convened since the start of the Trump administration. The IACC is required to meet by the Autism CARES Act, which was reauthorized last year.



This press conference and the administration's actions come on the heels of [Secretary Kennedy's testimony before the Senate Finance Committee](#), during which he made more false claims about vaccines. The targeting of autism is part of a broader initiative led by Secretary Kennedy to undermine public health and well-being, undermine trust in science, and to advance harmful, ableist beliefs that make all of us less safe.

We call on policymakers to collaborate with autistic individuals, families, researchers, clinicians, and disability organizations to ensure that policy is grounded in science and responsive to community needs.

We urge public leaders, institutions, and media to uphold scientific integrity, disseminate accurate public health information, and work together to strengthen—not weaken—the infrastructure of support for the entire autism community. It is what autistic people and their families deserve.

1 On the day of publication of this statement, the Federal Register posted a notice for IACC nominations. This does not change that the Committee has not convened.

## Signed By:

**Association of University Centers on Disabilities**

**Autistic Self Advocacy Network**

**Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network**

**National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities**

**The Arc of the United States**

**The American Association of People with Disabilities**

**The Autistic People of Color Fund**

**The Autism Society**

## Full list of endorsing organizations (rolling sign-on):

**Allies for Independence**

**American Association on Health & Disability**

**Association for Autism and Neurodiversity (AANE)**

**Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL)**

**Autistic Doctors International**

**Autistic Women's Alliance**

**Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law**

**Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)**

**International Coalition Against Restraint and Seclusion (ICARS)**

**International Council on Development and Learning (ICDL)**

**The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health**

**Organization for Autism Research**

**Pivot Neurodiversity**

**The Sibling Leadership Network**

**TASH**

