

Autism CanTech! Research Project: Information Letter and Consent Form

Title of the Study: Autism CanTech! Overcoming Barriers to Employment in the Digital Economy

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We are asking you to take part in a research study being done by NorQuest College. This study is supported by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), an organization that funds projects to improve the quality of life for all Canadians. The research team is also paid by the ESDC funded ACT! project.

What is the purpose of this study?

The goal of this study is to understand the experiences of Autistic youth. We want to know about your experiences of employment, including your successes, challenges, and needs for support. This will help us understand how programs like Autism CanTech! can best support Autistic youth across Canada.

How will you participate?

We will ask you to take part in at least one focus group and/or interview per cohort. In the focus group you will be asked different questions about experiences working directly with ACT! Program participants. These questions will be about your background, past experiences, challenges, and successes. We will also ask you to give feedback on the Autism CanTech! Program. These Focus groups and interviews will take place every six months. Focus group sessions will last 90 minutes. Interviews will last approximately 60 minutes. Focus groups and interviews will take place online. Camera usage is optional for the duration of both focus groups and interviews.

What are the benefits to being in this study?

Research can help staff debrief their experiences in a way that provides confidential feedback directly to program improvement and larger findings that provide evidence-backed approaches to advocacy. This research will help Autistic youth across Canada gain meaningful employment and share insights that will help you better support Autistic youth.

This information will be used to improve the ACT! program and advocate for greater inclusive employment.

Are there any risks to being in this study?

You might feel uncomfortable or emotional talking about your experiences. You may also have relationships with other focus group members that could be negatively impacted. If this happens, we will stop the research and work to provide you with the support that you need.

What happens to the information that is provided to researchers?

Confidentiality

The information that you share will be confidential. It will only be used for research projects related to improving equitable employment for the disability community. The only people who will see the information that you share are members of the research team at NorQuest College. If you choose to take part in a focus group, researchers will ask everyone to keep the privacy and confidentiality of one another; however, the research team cannot guarantee that others from the focus group will maintain the confidentiality of what is discussed. All activities will be online. To stay safe and help us keep your information confidential, we ask that you use safety measures like signing out of your account, closing your browser, and locking your screen or device when you are done using it.

Data Storage and Usage

The information you share will be stored securely on NorQuest College servers. Only researchers at NorQuest College will see your personal information. We will not include your personal information in any reports of this study. All data (voice recording, transcripts and notes) will be stored for a minimum of 5 years. Data is made anonymous (you are given a numbered code), will be password protected and the audio recording is only used for transcription purposes. Secondary information and your anonymous data may be used for further studies within ACT!. By signing this agreement, you agree to your anonymous data being used in other ACT! related studies.

Can I say no?

Absolutely! If you choose not to take part in this study then there will be no impact on your the person you support in the Autism CanTech! Program. If you do choose to participate, you can choose not to answer any question that we ask you. You can also change your mind and opt-out of the study by emailing the Lead Researcher, Brooke Leifso, at Brooke.Leifso@norquest.ca. In your email, you will tell her that you no longer want to be in the research project. You do not have to say why. It will no longer be possible to withdraw from the study once the report has been finished. If you choose to withdraw from the study at any time before the final report, your individual data will be deleted from the data sets. For more information you can contact Brooke.

Where do I find information about the study results?

Once available, you can find information about the study on the Autism CanTech! website at autismcantech.ca

Questions or Concerns?

Please contact the Lead Researcher if you have any questions or concerns. Their contact information is listed at the beginning of the information letter.

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have any questions regarding the rights of your ward as a research participant or how the research is being conducted you may contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615 or reoffice@ualberta.ca. Humber College affiliated participants may reach out to Research Chair, Dr. Lydia Boyko, lydia.boyko@norquest.ca

Please keep this form for your records.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act Statement

The personal information collected in this form will be used to complete the Autism CanTech! Research Project. Collection is collected under the authority of Section 33(C) of Alberta's *Freedom of Information and Privacy Act* (FOIP Act). Collected personal information will be protected from unauthorized access, use, and disclosure in accordance with the FOIP Act. For information about the collection and use of this information, contact the Principal Investigator, Brooke Leifso, at 10230 108 Street NW Edmonton, AB, T5J 1L6, brooke.leifso@norquest.ca

Consent Form

Please initial the boxes below:

- I understand what I read in the information letter about the research project at NorQuest College.
- I understand that I could ask questions about this research, and that I could ask for more information.
- I have been informed that my participation will include taking part in focus groups.
- I agree to my information being kept safely at NorQuest College for five years after the research project is done.
- I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time, and that this will not impact me in the Autism CanTech! program

By signing your name below you are agreeing to participate in the Autism CanTech! Research Project.

Full Legal Name:

Signature:

Date (mm/dd/yyyy):
