



## Healthy Relationships, Sexuality & Autism Program Atlantic Rollout

**Organization Name:** Autism Nova Scotia

**Program to be Evaluated:** Healthy Relationships, Sexuality & Autism (HRSA) Program- Atlantic Initiative.

### Invitation:

Autism Nova Scotia is seeking a qualified program evaluator to conduct a robust developmental evaluation of the Healthy Relationships, Sexuality & Autism Program- Atlantic Initiative.

This proposal will focus on: a) creating evaluative tools that will be used across multiple pilot sites as part of the rollout of the HRSA-Atlantic project, b) evaluating the anticipated and intended goals and outcomes of the project, as laid out in the funding proposal to the Public Health Agency of Canada c) document the successes and challenges of the pilot program, and speak to the place of HRSA within the larger adult ASD support landscape, d) offer recommendations for improving the delivery program both in program structure and operational delivery.

### Background:

Autism Nova Scotia was founded in October of 2002, with a vision of connecting individuals with autism, families and loved ones into a community to address the need for information, and to others facing a similar diagnosis. The organization offers a variety of programs and services including family support, social groups, camps, employment support and more.

**Our Vision:** A world where all people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can live their lives fully.

**Our Mandate:** We are a community-based organization that fosters understanding, acceptance, and collaborative approaches for those with Autism Spectrum Disorders throughout Nova Scotia.

### Purpose of the Project:

In 2018 Autism Nova Scotia created a comprehensive sexuality education pilot program for adults with ASD– the only one of its kind in Canada – Healthy Relationships, Sexuality & Autism (HRSA). The program was designed for delivery by community organizations that work with individuals with autism. That curriculum has been piloted in several communities, and with third-party evaluative input has undergone important developmental and delivery changes.

With funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Autism Nova Scotia is now scaling HRSA across Atlantic Canada through partnerships with 8 community-based autism service providers. This innovative program delivery structure is designed to create, in 8 communities, tangible learning opportunities for adults with ASD, their families, and caregivers, to achieve the following objectives:



- Improved sexual health, quality of life, and long-term wellbeing of adults with ASD
- Increased capacity within autism service providers to serve as a community hub for adults with ASD, their families, and caregivers to access sexuality education resources
- Decrease the stigma that adults with ASD are asexual, hyper-sexual, or do not require sexuality & relationship education.

The Healthy Relationships, Sexuality, & Autism (HRSA) curriculum was developed to primarily target adults with ASD over the age of 19—a key transitional period of psychological and social development for adults with ASD. Secondary target populations include family members, caregivers, and educators who will be able to connect with their local autism service provider to access autism-specific sexual health resources. The tertiary target are the professionals within the autism service provider partner organizations who will increase their knowledge and skillset for providing comprehensive sexuality support to their clients with ASD.

### **Scope of Works**

The successful evaluator should be able to support Autism Nova Scotia staff by providing suggestions on how to build the curriculum and assessments for evaluative purposes. Along with, employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The evaluator will be asked to construct their approach and methods around consulting with Autism Nova Scotia staff charged with overseeing the administration and contracting of the HRSA program.

The evaluator will also be asked to engage with participants, as well as to follow up with any participants who left the group, through interviews and/or questionnaires, and will be asked to allow those interviews to inform recommendations for how to best structure the program moving forward.

HRSA-Atlantic project evaluation will follow a mixed-method approach that will assess three key components of the project:

1. Efficacy of the HRSA- Atlantic Training (for staff) in increasing sexuality knowledge and comfort in staff for teaching sexuality education.
2. The effectiveness of the HRSA program on increasing participants with ASD (ages 19+) sexuality knowledge.
3. The project's impact on the lives of adults with ASD, their families, caregivers, and other community members.

The evaluation will provide developmental feedback throughout the project to inform and improve the structure of HRSA to achieve the desired outcomes. The evaluation will progress through six stages 1) Development; 2) Training; 3) Implementation; 4) Revisions; 5) Second Implementation; 6) Final report and sustainability report.



Data collection methodologies will vary to meet the outlined deliverables. This evaluation will therefore include:

- Administrative and survey data collection and analysis of participants, HRSA Educators, HRSA Supervisors, community members
- Ongoing developmental evaluation during sessions of participants, HRSA Educators, and HRSA Supervisors
- Sexuality Knowledge Pre-Post Assessments of participants, HRSA Educators, and HRSA Supervisors
- Self-Reflections of participants, HRSA Educators, and HRSA Supervisors
- Data tracking of participant, family and community support
- Education Session surveys completed by attendees
- Monthly e-learning assignments from HRSA Educators, and HRSA Supervisors
- Bi-weekly submitted work-plans from HRSA Educators, and HRSA Supervisors
- Program evaluations completed by participants and HRSA Educators, and HRSA Supervisors
- Qualitative interviews with staff, and range of participants and stakeholders

The data collected will be analyzed to assess the effectiveness of HRSA achieving the desired program outcomes:

- Improved sexual health, quality of life, and long-term wellbeing of adults with ASD
- Increased capacity within autism service providers to serve as a community resource hub for adults with ASD, their families, and caregivers to access sexual health education
- Decreased stigma that adults with ASD are asexual, hyper-sexual, or do not require sexuality & relationship education.

## Deliverables

### **HRSA- Atlantic Trainer Education:**

- Qualitative Measures:
  - Summative Self-reflection questionnaire on comfort with teaching sexuality education
- Mixed Methods:
  - Pre- and post-sexual knowledge assessments
  - Pre- and post values assessment
- Data and findings included in two annual reports and one project final report to be submitted to Public Health Agency of Canada. Including recommendations improvements.

### **HRSA Participant Sexual Knowledge across sites:**

- Qualitative Measures:
  - Summative Self-reflection questionnaire on comfort with teaching sexuality education
- Mixed Methods:
  - Pre- and post-sexual knowledge assessments
  - Ongoing formative assessments built into the program
  - 3 months follow up survey



- Data and findings included in two annual reports and one project final report to be submitted to Public Health Agency of Canada. Including recommendations improvements.

#### **Community Access Growth:**

- Mixed Methods:
  - Data tracking system for HRSA Educators and Supervisors track all client, family, and community support inquiries relating to sexuality.
  - Measurement for assessing support offered through bi-weekly rounds- conference calls that provide Educators and Supervisors the opportunity to connect and problem solve with others in their cohort along with the HRSA Program Director. All client support issues raised during rounds will be coded and tracked throughout the duration of the program.
  - Questionnaire for recording efficacy of reach back support requested by the Educators and Supervisors. To also assess for trends in individual community partners hurdling points.
- Data and findings included in two annual reports and one project final report to be submitted to Public Health Agency of Canada. Including recommendations improvements.

#### **Changes in Pre-existing Programs & Services:**

- Qualitative questionnaire provided to sites regarding changes in other programming
- Review of HRSA-Atlantic Training assignments for impact of other programs and services
- Data and findings included in two annual reports and one project final report to be submitted to Public Health Agency of Canada. Including recommendations improvements.

#### **Education Session and Community Involvement:**

- Qualitative: Education session evaluations will be completed by attendees
- Data and findings included in two annual reports and one project final report to be submitted to Public Health Agency of Canada. Including recommendations improvements.

#### **Sustainability Planning**

- Interview community partner stakeholders such as executive directors, program staff, and volunteers to determine the feasibility of the sustainability plan design
- Data and findings included in two annual reports and one project final report to be submitted to Public Health Agency of Canada. Including recommendations improvements.

#### **Timelines:**

November 2019 – June 2021



### **Proposal Requirements**

- Cover letter offering any relevant experience, as well as an overview of a Project Management Approach and work plan for evaluating the program;
- Declaration of Experience and Qualifications (Attach a separate CV if needed.)

### **Budget:**

Total 450 hours - \$25,000 plus HST = Total of \$28,750

### **Break down of Payment**

2019-2020- \$14,000 plus HST = \$15,050

2020-2021- \$11,000 plus HST = \$11,825

### **Application Deadline:**

Please submit applications electronically by October 28, 2019, and direct any questions to:

Yevonne Le Lacheur  
Program Director with Autism Nova Scotia  
Email: [programs@autismns.ca](mailto:programs@autismns.ca)