

Space Center Houston Now a Certified Autism Center

First Space Center in the World to Earn Certified Autism Center Designation

HOUSTON, June 25, 2018 (Newswire.com) - The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) has designated Space Center Houston as the first space center in the world to become a Certified Autism Center (CAC). The designation is awarded to organizations who have completed a professional training and review process with the goal to better serve individuals with autism and other sensory needs.



“Science, technology, engineering and mathematics education is for everyone,” said William T. Harris, the center’s president and CEO. “This certification highlights our dedication to be inclusive and to inspire the next generation of problem solvers.”

The certification process involves rigorous training for staff, inspections and improvements that enable Space Center Houston to better welcome and accommodate guests with autism spectrum disorder and other sensory and cognitive challenges. Earning the Certified Autism Center designation also includes a commitment to maintain that training and provide the best guest experience possible.

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— WILLIAM T. HARRIS
PRESIDENT AND CEO

“This is who we are,” said Williams. “We are a values-based organization and we’ve incorporated accessibility and inclusion into the very fabric of Space Center Houston as part of our way forward.”

Parents with children on the autism spectrum often find vacationing and visiting attractions such as museums and theme parks to be a challenge due to sensory

needs, dietary restrictions and safety concerns. For almost 20 years, IBCCES has been the industry leader in autism training for licensed healthcare professionals and educators around the globe. IBCCES recognized that many families with children with special needs have limited options and created programs specifically for the hospitality and travel industry.

“We’re thrilled to work with such an amazing organization that can impact the lives of so many. Space Center Houston has gone above and beyond to show its commitment to serving those on the spectrum and what they offer is so important for those individuals. It’s crucial for organizations to ensure all guests can experience the world around them in a safe and welcoming environment,” said Myron Pincomb, IBCCES Board Chairman.

The Space Center Houston goes beyond simply meeting ADA requirements and the Certified Autism Center designation is the latest example. In 2016, Space Center Houston hired Stephanie McMahan, a special education certified teacher and mother to a child with autism, as a senior lead instructor in its Education Department. The center named McMahan as their accessibility and inclusion coordinator in 2017. McMahan also leads the Accessibility and Inclusion working group, composed of representatives from across departments at Space Center Houston.

“The working group is our forum to brainstorm, plan and create plans to ensure that we are meeting all our guests’ needs,” said McMahan. “From facilities to our website, everyone comes together to support our [accessibility and inclusivity] initiatives.”

The center offers “Sensory Friendly Evenings,” with reduced lights, sounds and crowds as well as Space Center University for the visually impaired and other events designed to provide quality learning experiences for guests with special needs. McMahan also noted the center’s development of the “Stellar Explorer Guide” that individuals and school groups can use to prepare guests with autism for an upcoming visit and “Vocabulary Cards” for non- or low-verbal guests that can help with transitions and timelines.

In response to the need for more trained and certified destinations, IBCCES also created AutismTravel.com, a free online resource for parents that lists certified destinations and connects families to other resources and each other. Each destination listed on the site has met Certified Autism Center requirements, which include extensive staff training and an on-site audit conducted by leading autism experts. Space Center Houston will also be listed with other CACs on AutismMember.org, a partnership between IBCCES and Autism Society to connect families and individuals with businesses and resources committed to serving individuals on the spectrum.

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About Space Center Houston

The Manned Space Flight Education Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit science and space exploration learning center with extensive educational programs. Space Center Houston is the cornerstone of its mission to inspire all generations through the wonders of space exploration. The center draws 1 million visitors annually, was named “The Best Museum in Texas” by USA Today and generates a \$73 million annual economic impact in the greater Houston area. Space Center Houston is a Smithsonian Affiliate and the Official Visitor Center of NASA Johnson Space Center. More than 250,000 teachers and students from around the world visit the center annually to experience our educational space museum with more than 400 things to see and experience. For more information, go to www.spacecenter.org.

About IBCCES

Delivering The Global Standard For Training and Certification in The Field of Cognitive Disorders - IBCCES provides a series of certifications that empower professionals to be leaders in their field and improve the outcomes for the individuals they serve. These programs are recognized around the world as the leading benchmark for training and certification in the areas of autism and other cognitive disorders. As part of our commitment to sharing the latest innovations and research, IBCCES also hosts the International Symposium on Cognitive Research and Disorders to create a forum for collaboration among industry stakeholders.

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