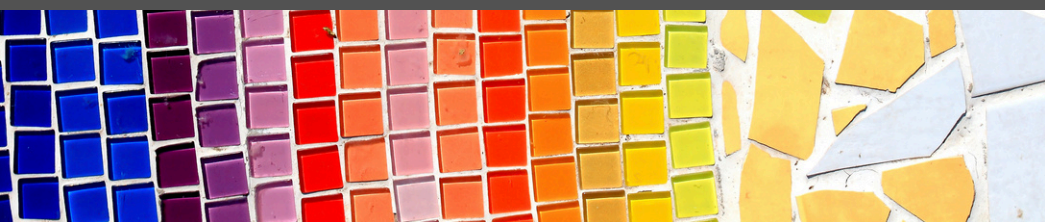


VOL. 2 ISSUE 6 • JUNE 2024

# MOSAIC MINDS

Official Newsletter of Midwest Autism & Therapy Centers



## DOWNLOADABLE GUIDES & ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE ONLINE!

Looking for some family-friendly resources? We've got you covered! From activities to parent guides, you'll find everything you need right here at Midwest. Click on any guide or activity to be taken to a downloadable, printer-friendly version. Share your completed word searches, coloring pages, and more on social media.

Tag us [@midwestautismcenter!](https://twitter.com/midwestautismcenter)

[midwestautismservices.com/downloadable-resources](https://midwestautismservices.com/downloadable-resources)



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Read this issue and more online!



## TORNADO SAFETY WITH ASD

Living in the Midwest, it seems that multiple times per year we need to be prepared to seek shelter or monitor for severe weather threats – tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, strong winds, etc. are a constant. These situations are stressful enough when living (or working) with small children, but concerns can be heightened when your child is on the Spectrum and may struggle with understanding the situation, transitioning to a safe space, or processing extra sensory input. That’s why it is important to have a plan in place for emergencies like these. This article will dive into risks, response actions, and preparedness tips for those living and/or working with kiddos on the Autism Spectrum.

### What is a Tornado?

According to the National Severe Storms Laboratory “A tornado is a narrow, violently rotating column of air that extends from a thunderstorm to the ground. Because wind is invisible, it is hard to see a tornado unless it forms a condensation funnel made up of water droplets, dust and debris. Tornadoes can be among the most violent phenomena of all atmospheric storms we experience.”

### Preparing & Executing a Tornado Safety Plan

Calm, cool, and collected, right? Sometimes this is easier said than done, especially in a crisis with children. In an emergency situation, like severe thunderstorms and tornadoes, having a preparedness plan can make all the difference in keeping yourself, your family, your students- everyone safe! Especially for those impacted by special needs and varying abilities.

#### 1. Develop a Plan

- Evaluate your home, office, classroom, etc. to determine a “shelter” place. Ideal locations within your space that can serve as safe spaces during a tornado often include a basement, bathrooms, or ground-level interior rooms without windows.
- Create a kit to keep on hand for when the time comes. Don’t forget to include sensory items and any preferred snacks your child might need.
- See our kid-friendly emergency guide, tailored to sensory needs, to help include the kiddos in the planning process to reduce anxiety and increase understanding.
- Discuss how to practice using the safe space without causing undue stress or fear. Perhaps a social story would help!
- Ensure if you are not the parent or guardian of the child, that you have a hard copy of emergency contact information for children under your supervision. We suggest compiling a file with this documentation beforehand and keeping it in a safe and accessible area for quick access. Make sure to review regularly to ensure documentation is up-to-date!

*Continued on page 3*



Read the complete  
blog online at  
[midwestautismservices.com/  
asd-mosaic-minds](http://midwestautismservices.com/asd-mosaic-minds)







## TORNADO SAFETY WITH ASD (CONT.)

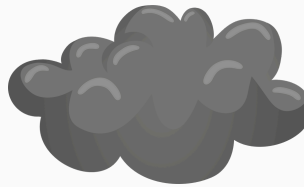
### 2. Communication Strategies During Emergencies

- When communicating with children on the Autism Spectrum, each conversation with each kiddo might be different. It's important to communicate in ways that each child will understand whether it's pictures, examples, or demonstration!
- To help explain the situation clearly and quickly, keep visual aids on hand or in your emergency kit. If your child uses an electronic device for communication, make sure you have a backup communication method or a portable block charger in case of a power outage.
- Try your best to remain calm (we know this one can be hard!) and provide reassurance throughout the event – even if your pep talk is for yourself.

### 3. Sensory Considerations During a Tornado

- It's important to address and plan for potential sensory triggers associated with tornadoes, such as loud noises (thunder, breaking glass, sirens, etc.), flashing lights, or confined spaces.
- Make sure to include sensory items of comfort that can help manage sensory overload in your preparedness kit. Recommended items could include a weighted blanket, sensory sac, fidget toys, noise-canceling headphones, a few preferred comfort items, and a change of clothes with their preferred fabric or feel.

Remember, severe weather can strike at any time and it's important to be prepared, not just with a plan and kit, but also with communication tools, and sensory needs. We encourage families to regularly review and practice their plans together, much like businesses and schools routinely practice fire drills.



Additional helpful resources that can be found on our website at [midwestautismservices.com/tornado-safety-with-asd](http://midwestautismservices.com/tornado-safety-with-asd)

- [Severe Weather Word Find Activity](#)
- [Creating an Emergency Preparedness Kit Coloring Sheet + Kit Instructions](#)
- [Emergency Preparedness Social Story](#)
- [Kid-Friendly Emergency Preparedness Kit](#)
- [Kid-Friendly Emergency Planning Guide](#)



Read the complete blog online at [midwestautismservices.com/asd-mosaic-minds](http://midwestautismservices.com/asd-mosaic-minds)



Creating an  
Emergency  
Preparedness Kit  
with Midwest Autism & Therapy Centers



## CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR PROMOTION!



**AMBER CREES**  
RBT - Level 3  
*Waukee Campus*



**INGA PETERSON**  
RBT - Level 2  
*Waukee Campus*



**KAYLA IPPACH**  
Senior RBT  
*West Des Moines Campus*

## CONGRATULATIONS ON PASSING YOUR RBT EXAM!



**LEILA TURKANOVIC**  
Registered Behavior  
Technician  
*Waukee Campus*



**JASON DIGAETANO**  
Registered Behavior  
Technician  
*Waukee Campus*



**ABRIL FLORES**  
Registered Behavior  
Technician  
*Ankeny Campus*



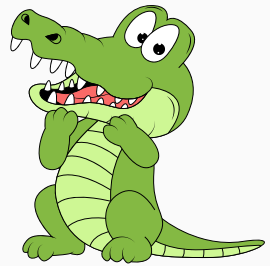


Our Minnesota team participated in the Steps for Autism event with the Autism Society of Minnesota. What an incredible event building connections, supporting our MN community, and having fun! Pictured above left to right: Alyssa Stettner (Woodbury Admin Assistant), Tieri Chun (Edina Program Manager, Rose Ludescher (Edina Senior RBT), Melanie Bren, BCBA (Regional Clinical Director), Maggie Woolcott (Edina RBT). Right picture: Natalie left her mark on the nature painting with St David's Center.

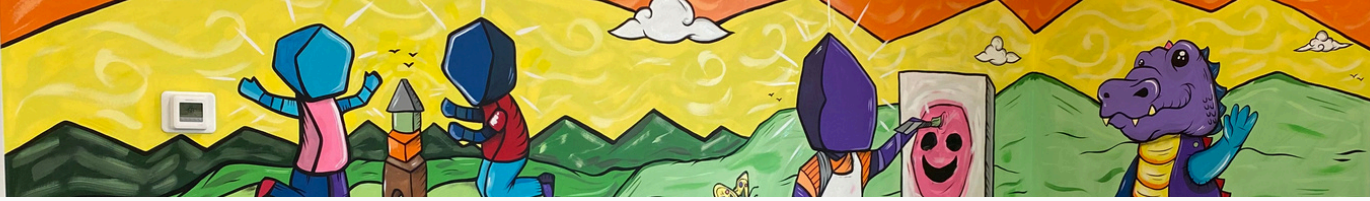


Our West Des Moines team and kiddos had an impromptu movie day when severe weather threatened to ruin their day. Kudos to our team members for helping these kiddos feel safe through a potentially scary situation.

Psst- do you and your family have your emergency preparedness plan & kit ready?







# BLENDING TOGETHER FOR AUTISM AWARENESS



In April, our Waukee kiddos & staff made Tie-Dye shirts to celebrate "blending together" for Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month!







## HAVE YOU SEEN THESE NEW FACES?

### **KILEY DEWHURST, M.ED., BCBA, LBA (SHE/HER)**

*Ankeny Campus*

- M.Ed. in Applied Behavior Analysis from Arizona State University
- B.A. in Psychology from the University of Iowa

Kiley is a passionate Behavior Analyst who has clinical experience in developing integrated curriculums for early learners. She loves that each client and family is different, which drives her to find ways to meet the needs of the entire family. Her skill set allows her to engage easily with families, schools, and other service providers to curate comprehensive treatment plans that empower children.



### **SHANE OLSON, M.S., BCBA, LBA (HE/ HIM)**

*West Des Moines Campus*

- M.S. in Applied Behavior Analysis from Chicago School of Professional Psychology
- B.A. in Criminal Justice and Psychology from Trinity Christian College

Shane Olson, a graduate of the Chicago School of Professional Psychology and Trinity Christian College, began working in the Autism services field as a school-based paraprofessional at the Scottsdale Children's Institute, in Scottsdale, AZ. Through this experience he was introduced to the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis and went on to earn his board certification as a Behavior Analyst in 2017. Shane brings with him a wealth of experience in both center-based and home/ community-based care.



### **CAITLIN KOTZ, M.ED., BCBA, LBA (SHE/ HER)**

*Waukee Center*

- M.Ed. in Applied Behavior Analysis from Arizona State University
- B.A. in Psychology from Central College

Caitlin Kotz is a Licensed Board Certified Behavior Analyst with 7+ years of experience. She graduated with her Bachelor's in Psychology from Central College in Pella, Iowa and went on to earn her Masters of Education in Applied Behavior Analysis from Arizona State University. Caitlin started working as a behavioral technician and knew she wanted to be part of the field to witness the incredible life-long impact ABA can have on the individual, family, and community.





Sign up to receive email updates from Midwest Autism & Therapy Centers! Email updates include monthly newsletters, new blog posts, center updates, activities for the kiddos, announcements and more.



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- SHANE O., BCBA, WDM
- ROWAN L., BCBA, WDM
- MCKENNA K., BT, EDINA
- LINDSEY K., RBT, WDM
- RENNE SOY T., BT, WOODBURY
- CAITLIN H., RBT, WAUKEE
- EMMA S., BT, WOODBURY



# June

## Get Connected

**ALTOONA CAMPUS:**  
950 28TH AVE SW, STE 2 ALTOONA, IA 50009 | 515-446-2075

**ANKENY CAMPUS:**  
2405 N ANKENY RD ANKENY, IA 50023 | 515-446-2080

**EDINA CAMPUS:**  
7550 FRANCE AVE S, STE 200 EDINA, MN 55435 | 952-955-4057

**WAUKEE CAMPUS:**  
287 SE WESTOWN PKWY WAUKEE, IA 50263 | 515-446-3420

**WEST DES MOINES CAMPUS:**  
1280 OFFICE PLAZA DR WEST DES MOINES, IA 50266 | 515-446-3420

**WOODBURY CAMPUS:**  
748 BIELENBERG DR WOODBURY, MN 55125 | 651-796-2306

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ENROLLMENT LINE: 515-513-9649

