

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

Therapy and peer groups near you (including neurodiversity-affirming groups)

Isolation is one of the quietest crises in adult autism services, and it hits differently depending on your zip code. Metro Detroit has options. Much of the Upper Peninsula has almost none in person. Virtual access changes that math.

BY JIM PALASTY · 9 MIN READ · WHAT EXISTS DEPENDS HEAVILY ON WHERE YOU LIVE

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IN-PERSON AUTISM PEER GROUPS
ACROSS MUCH OF THE UPPER
PENINSULA

Regional disparity isn't an exaggeration in Michigan. Metro Detroit and West Michigan have real options. Large stretches of the Upper Peninsula have none locally, which makes virtual groups a necessity, not a convenience.

How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

Isolation compounds quietly

Caregiver isolation and autistic adult isolation both build slowly, without a single crisis moment that forces attention.



STEP 2

Resources exist, unevenly

Metro Detroit and West Michigan have real caregiver and peer group options. Rural regions often have almost none nearby.



STEP 3

Virtual options close the gap

Video-based peer groups and caregiver support meetings genuinely work when driving two hours isn't realistic.

Regional access snapshot

Metro Detroit	Most options, both caregiver and autistic-adult peer groups
West Michigan	Several strong programs, concentrated around Grand Rapids
Mid-Michigan	Moderate access, more limited outside larger cities
Northern Lower Peninsula	Sparse in-person options, virtual access matters more
Upper Peninsula	Very limited local options, virtual access often essential

THE GROUP THAT FINALLY EXISTED
ON A SCREEN



Priya spent two years searching the Upper Peninsula for any kind of caregiver support group and found nothing within a reasonable drive. A virtual neurodiversity-affirming group, run out of Grand Rapids but open statewide, finally gave her a room full of people who understood her specific exhaustion without her having to explain it from scratch every time. She joined from her kitchen table every other Tuesday for over a year.

A SCREEN WASN'T THE BACKUP PLAN. FOR HER REGION, IT WAS THE ONLY PLAN THAT ACTUALLY EXISTED.

What matters, at a glance

MICHIGAN SPECIFIC

Caregiver support groups

Regular meetings for parents and family caregivers exist in most metro regions, in person and increasingly online.

Autistic adult peer groups

Peer-run and neurodiversity-affirming groups specifically for autistic adults are growing, though unevenly distributed across the state.

Regional deserts are real

Upper Peninsula families in particular often have zero dedicated in-person options within a reasonable drive.

What 'neurodiversity-affirming' means

Groups led by or centered on autistic perspectives, rather than framing autism purely as something to manage or fix.

Virtual fills real gaps

Video-based groups genuinely substitute for in-person options when geography makes driving unrealistic.

Ask before assuming nothing exists

A quick question to your supports coordinator or a specific web search often surfaces options families assumed didn't exist.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

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| ☐ Whether you're looking for a caregiver group, an autistic peer group, or both | ☐ A note on whether in-person or virtual access fits your life better |
| ☐ Contact information for your CMH supports coordinator | ☐ A short list of specific groups to try, not just one |
| ☐ Patience; the right fit sometimes takes trying two or three groups | |

YOUR MOVE

When you're looking for peer or caregiver support, here is where to start

- 1 Ask your CMH supports coordinator about regional caregiver groups.
- 2 Search specifically for 'neurodiversity-affirming' groups, not just general support groups.
- 3 If nothing exists locally, search for statewide virtual options.
- 4 Ask whether a group is peer-led or professionally facilitated before joining.
- 5 Try more than one group; fit varies a lot between groups.
- 6 Consider starting a virtual group yourself if a true gap exists in your region.

Nobody should have to explain their exhaustion from scratch every single time. A well-matched group means they don't have to.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

autismsocietymi.org · <https://www.autismsocietymi.org>

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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