ON PATH TO BECOME FIRST U.S. AUTISM CERTIFIED TRAVEL DESTINATION

- 32 million travelers with special needs take vacations every year
- $262 billion is spent on autism related services in the US each year
- With a 600% increase autism diagnoses in the U.S., autism is the fastest growing developmental disorder in the world

There is no doubt, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is on the rise. Autism has moved from being a relatively unrecognized disability to having a position of notoriety as the fastest growing developmental disability. ASD affects all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.
AutismTravel.com Survey results:

Do you currently take vacations as a family?

NO: 87%   YES 13%

Are you satisfied with current travel options for families with Autism?

NO: 89%   YES: 11%

Would you be more inclined to travel if autism friendly options were available?

☑️ YES: 93%   NO: 7%
Business proposition:

- Certification will book more business and attract more visitors
- Certification provides an unmatched opportunity for Mesa to gain a unique competitive advantage
- Certification is the right thing to do to serve this growing, yet underserved community
- ASD families want to be welcomed and want to travel
- ASD families are loyal and want to be reassured their vacation planning and outcome will be memorable and could lead to repeat business
How Visit Mesa went about this effort:

Through International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) and Autism Travel, Visit Mesa and our partners will become part of a network of trusted travel professionals serving the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) community.

Businesses train front-facing staff on autism traits and behaviors and how to support this type of traveler. They become CACs, certified autism centers.

Destination development:
Visit Mesa is working with IBCCES on auditing select Mesa businesses/attractions; this level of inspection results in a sensory guide that families can use in advance to plan their visit based on sensory triggers for their unique child/ren

Visit Mesa is developing planning tools (online and print) and programs (geocaching) for the ASD community.

Future ROI:
IBCCES will conduct impact studies after two-year certification.
The Visit Mesa Autism Travel Guide will feature all CAC accredited businesses within our community.
UPDATE

Rolling Out the Welcome Mat for Travelers With Autism

A growing number of theme parks, hotels and special attractions are introducing autism training and sensory guides.

The Thibault family at Rio Secreto, Playa Del Carmen, Mexico, 2017. From left, Chris, Sebastian, Tristan, Emerson and Nicole Thibault. via Thibault family