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Arts and Cultural Centers, Parks and Recreation Department and Dobson Ranch Library in Mesa Renew Certification, Continue to Support Mesa's Autism Certified City Initiative

High-res images can be found [here](#).

Mesa, AZ — Since becoming Certified Autism Centers™ (CAC) in 2019, **Arizona Museum of Natural History, i.d.e.a. Museum, Mesa Arts Center, Mesa Public Library's Dobson Ranch branch** and **Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities** are important partners in maintaining Mesa's designation as an Autism Certified City. Recently, these arts and cultural centers renewed their commitment to meeting the CAC standards, designated by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), which require staff to complete a training and certification program to better understand and welcome guests and their families that are autistic or sensory-sensitive. As part of the certification, IBCCES conducted an onsite review of each center to provide additional recommendations on how they can accommodate visitors.

"The Mesa Department of Arts and Culture is devoted to continuously improving the accessibility and inclusiveness of our facilities and programs," said Cindy Ornstein, director of Arts and Culture for the City of Mesa. "To this end, making our organizations as open and welcoming to those on the Autism spectrum is very important to us, and we are extremely proud to achieve our recertification as Autism-friendly institutions."

All **Mesa Arts and Culture** organizations have designated sensory rooms, provide visitors sensory bags upon request, utilize social stories, offer virtual tours and participate in the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program — providing discreet support to guests with disabilities that may not be apparent. Additionally, **Arizona Museum of Natural History** offers noise-canceling headphones and light-sensitivity glasses, and along with **i.d.e.a. Museum**, has implemented sensory guides and sensory gentle

hours. **Mesa Arts Center** recently added larger designated sensory spaces for festivals to accommodate more guests.

Dobson Ranch Library incorporates the IBCCES ideals into storytimes and events to deliver a positive experience for visiting families and individuals with sensory needs. “Providing inclusive experiences is one of our priorities as a library system. We will continue to explore and implement ways to provide great experiences and customer service to our visitors of every type and ability and we thank the IBCCES for its partnership and assistance in educating our staff on ways to achieve this goal!” said Polly Bonnett, Mesa library director.

Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities provide a range of activities such as weekly sports, special interest classes, social events and summer camps for people with developmental disabilities. They offer inclusive programming and highly sought-after adaptive programs in Mesa — currently offering 41 programs with over 1,500 participants.

In 2019, Mesa became the first ever Autism Certified City (ACC), also designated by IBCCES. This designation means that visitors and residents have access to organizations in healthcare, public safety, education, hospitality and entertainment, recreation and workplaces that are trained and certified to be more understanding and welcoming to individuals that are autistic or sensory-sensitive. The initiative was championed by Visit Mesa and quickly gained support from all areas of the community.

“IBCCES is excited to continue to partner with Arizona Museum of Natural History, i.d.e.a. Museum and Mesa Arts Center, as well as all of the partners in and surrounding Mesa who have joined in the Autism Certified City initiative. Mesa has been a leader and champion in taking steps to be more inclusive and accessible for the millions of autistic individuals and their families,” said Myron Pincomb, IBCCES board chairman. “Our programs are designed to provide long-term support and sustainability to ensure our partners continue to stay up to date on best practices and have the tools needed to better accommodate all guest needs.”

For more than 20 years, IBCCES has been the leader in cognitive disorder training and certification for healthcare, education, public safety, travel and corporate professionals around the globe. IBCCES created programs specifically for the hospitality and recreational organizations such as hotels, theme parks, and other attractions so staff would be more knowledgeable and other accommodations offered to this growing but underserved part of the community. IBCCES is the only credentialing board offering these types of programs, which include training from subject matter experts and autistic self-advocates, as well as long-term support and continuous learning, onsite reviews and more.

IBCCES also created AutismTravel.com, a free online resource for families that lists certified options and connects them to other resources. Each location listed on the site has met the Certified Autism Center™ (CAC) requirements.

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.

About City of Mesa Arts and Culture

Mesa's Department of Arts and Culture includes the [Arizona Museum of Natural History](#), [i.d.e.a. Museum](#) and [Mesa Arts Center](#), all located in downtown Mesa, Arizona. The mission of the department is to strengthen the creative, social and economic fabric of our community and region through inspiring, relevant, engaging and transformational experiences.

About the Dobson Ranch Library

Mesa Public Library's Dobson Ranch branch is a family-friendly neighborhood library in West Mesa. The quiet single-level space is adjacent to the universally inclusive Dobson Ranch Park. The library is dedicated to expanding minds, empowering individuals and enriching their diverse community. For more information, visit mesalibrary.org.

About Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities

The City of Mesa Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities (PRCF) is the first Parks and Recreation agency in the world to be designated as a Certified Autism Center (CAC). The goal of the department is to provide every family with an enjoyable and memorable experience while in our parks, recreation centers or programs, and we are proud to offer specialized services to individuals with autism and other special needs. For more information, visit mesaparks.com.

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