



Visit Mesa Becomes First-Ever Autism-Certified Destination Marketing Organization



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Visit Mesa Becomes First-Ever Autism-Certified Destination Marketing Organization, Taps into Market with 32 Million Annual Travelers.

MESA, ARIZ. (April 16, 2019) – [Visit Mesa](#) is the country’s first-ever destination marketing organization designated as a “Certified Autism Center” by the [International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards](#) (IBCCES). This new distinction is a result of the organization’s staff and governing board of directors completing more than 100 hours of specialized training to help families and individuals with special needs prepare for their perfect vacation and enjoy the varied travel offerings that can be had in the East Valley city.

“Visit Mesa is thrilled to be a national leader in the visitor industry and invest in training to better serve individuals with autism,” said Marc Garcia, president & CEO of Visit Mesa. “As a parent of a child who was diagnosed on the spectrum, not only is this the right thing to do, it’s an effort we are very proud to ignite here in Mesa. We are already seeing the movement spread within our community since embarking on this campaign only a few months ago.”

The recognition enables Visit Mesa to tap into a market with 32 million annual travelers, according to IBCCES’ data. More than \$262 billion is spent on autism-related services in the U.S. each year, according to IBCCES. Autism affects a significant number of people as ASD is at a 600 percent increase year after year, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

Now that Visit Mesa has become the first-ever destination marketing organization designated as a “Certified Autism Center”, on April 16 it raised the bar even higher by requesting partner businesses in Mesa’s hospitality community follow their lead to undergo autism training. Guest-facing staff at Mesa businesses are actively being approached and will complete autism sensitivity and awareness training within the next six months. Visit Mesa partner businesses that have expressed interest early on or are currently enrolled in the certification process include several Mesa hotels, museums, and the many family attractions that serve ASD visitors such as Jake’s Unlimited.

Businesses will achieve certification through IBCCES which includes training and knowledge assessment of common behaviors and sensory considerations associated with ASD.

"Visit Mesa and its Board of Directors believe certification will serve this growing, yet underserved community. It's an unmatched opportunity for Mesa to elevate our national travel brand and our destination promise," Garcia said.

Following Visit Mesa's lead, the Mesa Chamber of Commerce's entire staff and Board has also completed the IBCCES training. Mesa Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities Department is in the process of training approximately 500 employees and was one of the first organizations to commit to the training. When complete, Mesa Parks will represent one of the largest investors into the program.

"We are thrilled the Mesa Chamber of Commerce and Mesa Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities Department have wholeheartedly jumped into the training, indicating the depth of support in Mesa for individuals with autism," Garcia said.

Participating businesses will be included in a variety of planned Visit Mesa destination marketing opportunities such as:

- National awareness campaign featuring new advertising themes promoting ASD travel
- Dedicated online presence on [AutismTravel.com](https://www.AutismTravel.com), a free online resource for parents
- Autism-Certified travel planning portal on the new VisitMesa.com website and mobile travel app
- Featured location on the geo-caching app featuring Mesa and promoted to ASD travel community

For almost 20 years, IBCCES has been the industry leader in autism training for licensed healthcare professionals and educators around the globe. Florida-based IBCCES created training and certification programs after recognizing that many families with children who have special needs have limited travel options.

"We're impressed with the dedication of the Visit Mesa staff and the entire community to better serve individuals on the autism spectrum. Organizations like Visit Mesa and its supporters are critical to accomplishing our mission of inclusivity for all families and they are a big part of this movement across the nation," said Myron Pincomb, IBCCES Board Chairman.

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About Visit Mesa The mission of Visit Mesa is to promote, market, and sell the Mesa area as a year-round, premiere business and leisure travel destination on behalf of our stakeholders while enhancing the quality of life for all area residents. Learn more at [VisitMesa.com](https://www.VisitMesa.com).