A brain donation to Autism BrainNet creates a legacy that helps advance research on autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and related neurodevelopmental conditions. Considering brain donation for research may be difficult, but long-term planning can help minimize the burden of decision-making at the time of death. In the midst of grief and loss, Autism BrainNet’s donor families report that they find a sense of hope and purpose in their loved one’s continued contribution to science.

For more information

Call: 877-333-0999
Email: info@autismbrainnet.org
Visit: AutismBrainNet.org

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @autismbrainnet

Advancing research through the gift of brain donation

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AutismBrainNet.org

Autism BrainNet is a program of the Simons Foundation Autism Research Initiative (SFARI). Visit SFARI.org to learn more.
**What is Autism BrainNet?**

Autism BrainNet works with researchers and the communities affected by autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions to develop a sensitive and effective strategy for acquiring postmortem brain tissue.

Each donation is preserved and stored to facilitate the highest quality research into the causes of these conditions. The data generated will be shared to enable the development of treatments that could improve the quality of life of individuals who are affected by them.

Autism BrainNet includes collection sites, also called nodes, in the United States:

- Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA
- University of California, Davis MIND Institute, Sacramento, CA
- University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, TX

Autism BrainNet also has collection sites internationally:

- Douglas–Bell Canada Brain Bank, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
- University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom

Each node follows the high standards set by Autism BrainNet to collect, process, store and distribute the precious gift of donated brain tissue to qualified researchers worldwide. Applications to receive brain tissue are evaluated for scientific merit by the Autism BrainNet Scientific Review Committee.

**Why is it important to study the brain to understand autism?**

There is still much to learn about how the human brain works and the differences in how the brain of a person who has autism works. Studying postmortem brain tissue is extremely important for researchers to better understand the cellular and molecular changes associated with autism in the human brain and help identify new and effective treatments. However, brain donations to advance this research are needed.

**What is the process for making a brain donation?**

Autism BrainNet makes the donation process as simple as possible for every family. Donor families are treated with respect and compassion and are provided with ongoing support. Here are the steps:

1. **STEP 1**
   - When a death has occurred or is near, the family or healthcare provider calls Autism BrainNet at 877-333-0999 within 24 hours for immediate assistance. Our staff is available 24/7 and will walk your family through the donation process. Autism BrainNet clinical staff will work with the legal next of kin to obtain authorization for donation.

2. **STEP 2**
   - Autism BrainNet staff will coordinate brain recovery and transportation to the nearest Autism BrainNet node.

3. **STEP 3**
   - An Autism BrainNet clinician will follow up with the donor family to schedule a video meeting or home visit to learn more about the donor.

**Who can become a brain donor for Autism BrainNet?**

Autism BrainNet accepts donations from

- Individuals of any age with a diagnosis of autism, with or without other related health conditions.
- Individuals up to the age of 50 without a diagnosis of autism or other neurologic or psychiatric conditions. This donation will benefit scientific studies by allowing the comparison of brain tissue from people with and without autism.
- Individuals without a diagnosis of autism but with a genetic diagnosis included in the SPARK gene list that confers a high risk of autism.

**Is there a cost associated with a donation to Autism BrainNet?**

No. Autism BrainNet takes care of all the financial costs associated with the donation.

**Does brain donation interfere with funeral plans?**

No. Brain donation does not interfere with autopsy and funeral plans, including having an open-casket viewing.