

Enhance Your Hotel Team's Autism Awareness

📅 November 1, 2022 / 👤 By Rod Clough, Alan Day (Founder, Autism Double-Checked)



We at HVS have long valued the importance of embracing diversity, celebrating our differences, and building a better consulting team as a result. Exceptional teams do this: embracing, accepting, and understanding these differences to become more deeply connected and effective. When a hotel operations team is similarly understanding and celebratory of differences, guests can feel the difference and often become repeat guests as a result.

Autism awareness is an effort HVS supports by engaging with **Autism Double-Checked**, an organization that provides education and training about this disability. We encourage you and your hotel operations team to learn more. Beyond the matter of corporate social responsibility, improving awareness in this area can also strengthen a property's profile in the market as one that is welcoming to all and understanding of challenges that guests and their families may face.

A 20- to 25-Million-Person Market

The size of the market affected by autism is significant. The **Centers for Disease Control (CDC)** puts the number of children impacted by autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as 1 in 44. When factoring in parents and siblings, this extrapolates to a market size between 20 and 25 million in the U.S. alone.

According to Autism Double-Checked, per a recent survey, 87% of families in this market aren't currently taking family vacations. The same group, however, indicated that they would do so if autism-friendly facilities were available. Now that several airlines and airports are embracing autism inclusion, this population is seeking places to stay.

What makes this opportunity even more appealing is the fact that this market segment tends to prefer off-season or quieter times when places are less crowded, thereby traveling at times when hotel occupancy levels are at their lowest.

The First Step is Simple

In the past, the number of autism-friendly hotels, autism-friendly airlines, and autism-friendly attractions was close to none. Pet-friendly, yes, but autism-friendly, not a chance. Autism Double-Checked is changing that by training and certifying travel companies at three designated levels of autism-readiness. At each successive level, the degree of commitment to inclusivity becomes greater.

Accessing a market of over 20 million that isn't currently taking vacations and generally prefers low season travel may seem daunting, but it can be easy. How? A good first step is to connect with the experts at Autism Double-Checked on **their website** or by phone at (203) 750-0000.

About Autism Double-Checked

Founder **Alan Day** and his partners have more than 100 years of collective experience in the travel industry. They also have special-needs children and understand firsthand what precautions are necessary to create a safe and enjoyable space for individuals with ASD while away from home.



Summary

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About Rod Clough



As President of HVS Americas, Rod oversees strategy execution for HVS throughout its 40 Americas locations. Rod's tenure with HVS spans over 25 years, during which time he has played an important role in growing the company from a few locations across the Americas to 40. In a typical year, Rod's group consults on over 2,500 existing or proposed hotels and resorts, and in 2021, he oversaw the 568-hotel Extended Stay America appraisal portfolio. In 2003, Rod founded the firm's sister appraisal division, U.S. Hotel Appraisals, which completes roughly 1,000 hotel appraisals annually. Rod is a founding owner/partner of HVS Mexico-Latin America, and he re-launched the firm's U.S. Brokerage and Capital Markets division in 2018. Rod is a Designated Member of the Appraisal Institute (MAI) and a licensed real estate broker. Furthermore, Rod is proudly Latino and gay, and his firm is welcoming of all races and colors, sexual orientations, ages, genders, and gender identities. Once associates join HVS, they tend to stay due to the extraordinary culture Rod has inspired, a culture defined by the ideals of balance, connectivity, efficiency, collaboration, honesty, integrity, kindness, and excellence, among others. Rod resides in northern Colorado where he and his husband Jeff are raising their daughter, Rory.