



## ► **About Autism Services, Inc.**

Located in Western New York, Autism Services, Inc. (ASI) creates meaningful opportunities for autistic people, their families and their communities. ASI provides a variety of specialized services including Adult Day Services, A Certified Education Program, Residential Services, Employment Support Services, Family Support Services, including Respite, In-Home Clinical Supports, Therapeutic Recreation (TRAC), After School and Vacation Camp Services, and related Clinical Supports. ASI is the only agency in WNY who solely supports autistic people.

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We understand that it can be difficult to accept a new way of approaching challenges – especially if you have done something one way for so long. However, as an organization, we have found that minimizing interventions has resulted in drastically reduced rates of injury for both staff members and the people we support. Looking back, we believe that it would have been more unsafe for us to continue with current approaches, as opposed to moving forward with Ukeru. I believe and frequently say it is never okay to put your hands on anyone.

**Veronica Federiconi**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Challenges



Autism Services, Inc. was looking to educate staff in a trauma-informed approach with the ultimate goal of reducing physical interventions and staff injuries. ASI wanted to give their people another way to communicate, whether it was about not feeling well, sensory issues, transition, etc. without retraumatizing them. Not knowing what past traumas have been experienced, it was critical to ASI’s CEO Veronica Federiconi to have a “hands off approach, as it is never ok to put hands on someone. We have more success when we give control back to our people.”

# Working with Ukeru

Autism Services, Inc. began implementing Ukeru in early 2018. “We ensured that there was a clear message coming from all levels, starting with leadership that this was an approach that we were committed to implementing,” said Federiconi. Initial meetings with Ukeru's President Kim Sanders and ASI staff provided valuable information on the Ukeru approach. ASI then held individual meetings with management, site specific meetings and had strong agency communication through various avenues. Eager to get started, ASI conducted several trainings over the course of a few months training approximately 250 staff. To ensure implementation was successful, policies and agency documents were modified to reflect the use of Ukeru. “If it was identified that a restrictive intervention was utilized, we recognized further training on Ukeru was needed,” said Abigail Setlur Director of Training and Staff Development. To ensure change was sustainable, ASI chose Ukeru instructors from all program areas, created robust systems for collecting data and conducted observations to maintain fidelity.

## Results

The results have been remarkable. ASI has seen a significant reduction in the use of physical interventions and staff injuries. As a result, they have had a reduction in workers compensation costs due to fewer injuries. Ukeru has helped their staff develop more positive relationships with the people they support. Setlur shared that **“staff appreciate that we have an approach that reduces their need to implement physical interventions and reduces the risk of injury.”** Setlur concluded by describing Ukeru’s approach as invaluable.

84%

Restraint  
reduction



Reduced staff  
injuries by 40%



Trauma-informed  
organizational  
shift

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Ukeru has become embedded into our culture and environment. Ukeru training also increased staff confidence because they are trained in a proactive, hands-off approach.

**Veronica Federiconi**  
Chief Executive Officer