



## **Statement in Support of Scientifically Valid, Affirming Care for People with Autism and their Families**

The American Psychoanalytic Association is concerned by the recent dissemination of misinformation regarding autism from the US Government.

Autism is a complex, neurodevelopmental disorder with no single cause. Based on current scientific research, its origins are most likely due to a combination of genetic, biological, and environmental factors. Claims from government health authorities that childhood vaccines or use of specific medications in pregnancy can cause autism is not only unscientific; it can lead to great harm. Misinformation can cause substandard or injurious medical treatment, sow confusion and unnecessary anxiety, and perpetuate damaging stereotypes about people with autism, worsening discrimination, stigma, and barriers to care in a group that has already faced marginalization.

People with autism, like all people, are not a monolith. Psychoanalytic clinicians strive to appreciate the enormous complexity of the individual mind and the systems within which it exists. Broad generalizations about people with autism threaten to erase the very personhood that psychoanalysis seeks to actualize. As such, mischaracterizations of people with autism are anathema to the core values of psychoanalytic work.

People with autism, as well as their families deserve access to effective, scientifically robust care that sees them as whole individuals with diverse strengths and highly variable medical, social, psychological needs. Assigning blame for complex outcomes to single actions by parents can cause untold and unnecessary guilt and distress for families.

Therefore, the American Psychoanalytic Association endorses expansion of funding for autism research guided by valid scientific approaches and respect for people with autism and their families.