

February 2018  
Dear MAIER Partner,

We are writing to tell you about an opportunity to participate in an autism research study, SPARK (Simons Foundation Powering Autism Research for Knowledge). The study is conducted in part by Dr. Matthew Siegel and Maine Medical Center Research Institute/Maine Behavioral Healthcare and is sponsored by the Simons Foundation Autism Research Initiative (SFARI). Dr. Siegel is the Principal Investigator of SPARK for the Northern New England region of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. Although Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research is not a member of the SPARK clinical site network, we wanted to provide our network with information about and the opportunity to participate in SPARK.

- SPARK is the world's largest autism research community, with a goal of recruiting 50,000 families to participate.
- The study is conducted online (<https://sparkforautism.org/mainemedicalcenter>) and individuals and families with an autism diagnosis who live in the United States can register.
- Participants will be asked to share information about their medical and family history, as well as to provide a saliva sample for genetic analyses to help speed up research and advance our understanding of autism. SPARK is analyzing DNA to improve our understanding of the roles that genes play in the development of autism.
- SPARK will provide gift cards for saliva samples in the amount of up to \$50, and will provide additional incentives for the completion of online questionnaires.
- <https://sparkforautism.org/mainemedicalcenter>, under Dr. Matthew Siegel's supervision, is one of 25 SPARK clinical sites across the country.
- Participants also have the opportunity to participate in other research studies through SPARK research match if you choose to share your information with the researchers.

Whether or not you participate will not affect your relationship with the MAIER. If you want to learn more about SPARK, please call or email Laurie Raymond, Research Coordinator, at (207) 661-7620 or [sparknne@mmc.org](mailto:sparknne@mmc.org) to let her know. The research team is available to support participants through any part of the registration/collection process, answer questions or to even schedule a home collection. In the coming months, there may also be an opportunity to learn more about SPARK directly from a member of the research team at events we host. Please reach out to them for more information or to schedule a talk about this important research.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Deborah Rooks-Ellis, Ph.D., Director Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research  
Donna Doherty, M.S., Research Associate, MAIER Family Partnership Director