



# SomaliCAN Outreach

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## In this Edition

1. Improving perceptions of disability within our communities.....2-4
2. Study Somali Language & Culture at OSU:.....5
3. Somali Graduation and Scholarship Program.....6
4. Healthy Living: Exercise Tips.....7
5. Community Resources and Contacts: .....8

## Qormooyinka Caddadka

1. Hagaajinta Aragtida Bulshadeenna ee Curyaannimada.....2-4
2. Ka Baro Afka iyo Dhaqan Soomaali Jaamacadda OSU:.....5
3. Xaflad Bulsho oo Muhiim ah: Qalinjebinta.....6
4. Ha Moogaan Jimicsiga: .....7
5. Adeegyada iyo Xiriirka Bulshada: .....8

# Improving perceptions of disability within our communities

By **Sirad Shirdon**

It's clear that there is a stigma attached to disability in the Somali community. Some parents keep their children with developmental disabilities at home, fearing that if they're in the public eye, they will be the talk of the community and the family will be looked down upon. This is not a new outlook, adopted while in the diaspora, as even in pre-civil war Somalia, Somalis with developmental disabilities were often hidden from their communities. Moreover, other Somalis believe that disabilities are from Allah and nothing can be done to change the conditions of these children. This outlook stops parents short from reaching out for help from schools, doctors, or therapists, as they don't believe the situation will be bettered. While Islam does indeed teach us that everything is from Allah, we also learn that if someone is ill, we should do everything possible to assist them. It is time that we had an open and honest discussion about disability, about the resources available to disabled children

and their families, and how we can ensure that all Somali parents feel secure within their communities, regardless of the medical condition of their children.

To begin, I wanted to define some terms to assist you in understanding the issues this article seeks to raise. Developmental disabilities are disabilities that leave affected individuals with impairments in the following areas: physical, learning, language or behavior. These disabilities typically show up before the age of 18 and impact individuals for the whole span of their lives. Conditions which fall under this category include Autism, Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Learning Disability, Cerebral Palsy and Down's syndrome. Developmental delays also indicate the above, but only last temporarily. For example, a child who is not speaking by the age of 4 would be classified as developmentally..

delayed, but that label would disappear once they begin talking. Astonishingly, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 1 out of every 6 children in the United States is affected by a developmental disability or disorder (2013).

Some in our community continue to feel that there is stigma attached to having a family member with special needs. If we are to use our own clinic as a sample of the greater Somali community, it is clear that some parents tend to look the other way when informed that their child has a developmental disability. While some families are accepting of such a diagnosis and are keen on assisting their child in any way possible, others deny that there is anything wrong with their child. "There is nothing wrong with my child" is a common refrain I hear from some families whose children have been diagnosed with a developmental disability.

## Improving perceptions of disability within our communities

For young children with special needs, a common recommendation for parents is to enroll their child in special needs preschool, preschools equipped with various different therapies (including speech therapy and physical therapy). This alone is considered to be shameful and some parents will refuse the recommendation, on grounds that their child is just fine. And yet, these families are the ones who voluntarily seek assistance for their children. What of the countless other families who do not know there are services out there to assist their children? Or worse, families who know there are services, but would rather keep their child at home due to societal stigma around disability?

In order to combat this situation, we should be targeting the misperceptions that exist within our community about disability, which create an environment where some parents of children with disabilities feel ashamed. Being the parent of a special needs child can be a trying and socially isolating experience, even for those parents who have accepted their child's condition. Some parents do not feel they can attend common social functions with their child (e.g. weddings, the masjid etc.) due to some of their child's behaviors and will often stay home. These mothers are often exhausted, and are typically in a cycle of caring for their special needs children, while addressing the (innumerable) needs of other children in the home. At times, these mothers are left with little - if any- energy to take care of their own needs, which only worsens the situation.

Some parents, mistakenly believing that environmental factors are to blame for their children's disability, relocate to East Africa believing that their children will spontaneously recover if they are in what is considered to be a more natural environment. Many of these families return several years later to finally receive assistance for their children, when matters have only been exacerbated because of the lack of early intervention.

### What can you do?

- Learn about developmental disabilities and become familiar with the resources available to affected children and their families.
- If you have family/community members with a developmentally disabled child, extend your assistance.

## Improving perceptions of disability within our communities

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- Learn about developmental disabilities and become familiar with the resources available to affected children and their families.
- If you have family/community members with a developmentally disabled child, extend your assistance.
- If you are hosting a community event or know of an event, make sure that you are including all families, including families with special needs children.
- Learn about parent support groups and/or advocacy organizations in your community and connect families with them. These groups lobby for the rights of disabled children, provide supports for parents of disabled children and seek to improve societal perceptions of disability.
- If you're a parent of a disabled child who has a keen understanding for the medical and educational systems, consider starting a parent support group.

- Are you or someone you know apart of Somali media? Encourage them to cover this issue on their radio programs, TV shows, articles etc. Somali media outlets (particularly TV) have played their part in facilitating awareness by hosting parent advocates, which has been helpful in educating our communities and reducing stigma. But more can be done!
- If you're a concerned community member, an individual with a disability or a family member of a child with a disability, consider taking a training course, designed to teach individuals the skills they need to advocate for themselves. Such courses will teach you everything from how to navigate the school system to how to lobby local politicians to improve laws for the disabled. One example of such an organization is Partners in Policymaking (<http://mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/>).

I am hopeful that this article will highlight the urgency of increasing awareness of developmental disabilities within our community and providing assistance to families with children with special needs.

### References

Developmental Disabilities (2013). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities/index.html>

**Organizations** (please note: this is not an exhaustive list)

Minneapolis Down Syndrome Support Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Minneapolis-Somali-Downs-syndrome-Support-Group/159279504153330>

Somali American Autism Support:

<http://saaswa.webs.com/>

Somali American Autism Foundation:

<http://www.saafmn.org>

Somali Autism Awareness: <http://www.somaliautismawareness.com/>

Somali Autism Foundation: <http://www.somaliautismfoundation.com>

Somali Disability and Elderly Group: <http://sodes.org/>

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# Learn Somali Language and Culture at the Ohio State University

## By Jibril Mohamed

### Somali Language Minor at the Ohio State University

Dear prospective student,

If you are looking for a language that both rhymes and rewards, choose Somali! The Department of African American and African Studies at the Ohio State University houses the largest program in Somali language and culture in the United States. You can earn a minor in Somali language and culture at OSU.

It is fun to learn Somali because the language has an extremely simplified Latin alphabet structure and words that are written as they sound. You master these sounds at once and you retain them forever. What is more, Somali at the Ohio State University is backed by the presence of one of the largest Somali communities in Central Ohio. You will enjoy authentic food, shopping, and conversations with native Somali speakers at any time.

Learning Somali will also raise your prospects of finding jobs locally, nationally as well as internationally with government agencies, international development organizations and private enterprises that deal with the sizable Somali communities both in the U.S. and in the Horn of Africa region.

Thank you for considering Somali. Come to one of our classes and you will be impressed by the depth of this language and culture.

For more information about the Somali language program at OSU, please contact Jibril Mohamed or Mohammed Omer at (614)292-0758 or by e-mail at [Mohamed.196@osu.edu](mailto:Mohamed.196@osu.edu).  
<http://aaas.osu.edu/languages/undergrad-somali-minor>

### Waxaa kuu Diyaarsan Takhasuska Af Soomaaliga Jaamacadda Ohio State

Ardada danaynaysa oo dhan,

Haddii aad doonaysid af laxan leh oo aad ka libin gaarto, ka dhig dookhaaga af Soomaali! Waaxda culuunta Maraykanka Madow iyo Arrimaha Afrika ee Jaamacadda Ohio State waxaa qayb ka ah barnaamijka ugu ballaaran dalka Maraykanka ee lagu daraaseeyo dhaqanka iyo afka Soomaaliga. Waxaad diyaarin kartaa takhasus afka & dhaqan Soomaaliga ah OSU.

Barashada afka Soomaaliga aad ayay u xiiso badan tahay sababtoo ah qoraalka af Soomaaliga wuxuu raacaa alifbeetada Laatiinka oo hab sahlan loo diyaariyay iyadoo erayada loo qorayo sida ay u dhawaaqaan. Dhawaaqyadan ayaad mar qura baranaysaa weligaana adeegsanaysaa. Waxaa intaas dheer, af barnaamijka Af Soomaaliga ee Jaamacadda Ohio State waxa kuu fududayn doona jaaliyadda Soomaaliyeed ee aadka u ballaaran ee ku dhaqan gobolka Ohio. Waxaad si sahal ah u heli doontaa cunto Soomaali asal ah, xarumo dukaamaysi, iyo wada hadal aad la yeelato dad Soomaali dhalada ah xilligii aad doontid.

Barashada Soomaaliga waxay sidoo kale sare u qaadi doontaa fursadahaaga in aad shaqo wacan ka heshid degaanka, gobolka, dalka, amaba ururro iyo shirkado caalami ah oo ka hawl gala dalka Maraykanka iyo deegaannada Soomaalida ee Bariga Afrika.

Waad ku mahadsan tahay in aad ka fekertay barashada Afka Soomaaliga. Imow fasal af Soomaali ah si aad uga maqsuuddo murtida fog ee dhaqanka iyo afkeenna.

Faahfaahin dheeraad ah kala xiriir Jibriil Maxamed ama Maxamed Cumar (614)292-0758 ama e-mail ugu dir [Mohamed.196@osu.edu](mailto:Mohamed.196@osu.edu).  
<http://aaas.osu.edu/languages/undergrad-somali-minor>



## EVENT OF THE MONTH... ...XAFLADAHA BISHA...

### The 4th Annual Ohio Somali Graduation & Scholarship Program



#### Attention Somali Graduates:

To be considered for a **scholarship** award, please bring a copy of your final transcript and your parent or guardian.

Free and Open to the Public

You are cordially invited to the annual Ohio Somali Graduation and Scholarship Ceremony:

**Friday, August 9, 2013 @ 6:00pm—11:30pm**

Hilton Columbus at Easton 3900 Chagrin Drive, Columbus, OH 43219

#### SPEAKERS:

- Welcome Remarks: Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman
- Keynote Speaker: Hon. Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo, Former Prime Minister of Somalia
- Opening Statement: Dr. Abdinur Mohamud, former Somalia Education Minister
- Featured Speaker: U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio (Invited)
- **Awards and Recognitions:** Ohio Senator Charleta Tavares

**SomaliCAN**  
Somali Education Association

**FLICKINGER**  
LEGAL GROUP  
**LIFESKILLS**  
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**THE CITY OF COLUMBUS**  
MICHAEL B. COLEMAN, MAYOR

COMMUNITY RELATIONS  
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Department of African American & African Studies

**OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**  
Center for African Studies

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Marion

**The Buckeye Ranch**

**COLUMBUS STATE**  
Community College

**MAS Columbus**

**Franklin County Children's Services**  
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**Midnimo Middle School**

**International Academy of Columbus**

**Enhanced Home Health Care**

**OHIO UNIVERSITY**

For more information, please contact the organizing committee:

Phone: (614)439-3034 E-mail: [info@SomaliCAN.org](mailto:info@SomaliCAN.org)

**GRADUATING STUDENTS: PLEASE BRING A COPY OF YOUR FINAL TRANSCRIPT FOR SCHOLARSHIP CONSIDERATION.**

**Choose CareSource as your Health Plan.**

**Call: 1-800-488-0134**

**CareSource**

## Exercise for Life

## Joogtee Jimicsiga

### EXERCISE FOR LIFE

How do I get started?

Start by talking with your family doctor. This is especially important if you haven't been active, if you have any health problems or if you're pregnant or elderly.

Start out slowly. If you've been inactive for years, you can't run a marathon after only 2 weeks of training! Begin with a 10-minute period of light exercise or a brisk walk every day and gradually increase how hard you exercise and for how long.

How do I stick with it? Here are some tips that will help you start and stick with an exercise program:

**Choose something you like to do.** Make sure it suits you physically, too. For instance, swimming is easier on arthritic joints.

**Get a partner.** Exercising with a friend or relative can make it more fun.

**Vary your routine.** You may be less likely to get bored or injured if you change your exercise routine.

Walk one day. Bicycle the next. Consider activities like dancing and racquet sports, and even chores like vacuuming or mowing the lawn.

**Choose a comfortable time of day.** Don't work out too soon after eating or when it's too hot or cold outside. Wait until later in the day if you're too stiff in the morning.

**Don't get discouraged.** It can take weeks or months before you notice some of the changes from exercise, such as weight loss.

**Forget "no pain, no gain."** While a little soreness is normal after you first start exercising, pain isn't. Take a break if you hurt or if you are injured.

**Make exercise fun.** Read, listen to music or watch TV while riding a stationary bicycle, for example. Find fun things to do, like taking a walk through the zoo. Go dancing. Learn how to play a sport you enjoy, such as tennis.

**Sneak Exercise Into Your Day**

Take the stairs instead of the elevator

Go for a walk during your coffee break or lunch

Walk all or part of the way to work

### Jimicsiga Ha Moogaan

Sidee u billaabaa?

Ka billow inaad la hadasho dhakhtarkaaga gaarka ah. Tani waxay si gaar ah muhiim u tahay haddii aadan horay u jimicsan jirin, haddii aad xanuun qabtid, ama aad uur tahay, ama aad aad waayeel tahay.

U billow si tartiib ah. Haddii aadan muddo sanado ah jimicsanin, ma ordi kartid maaradoon markaad 2 toddobaad oo keliya jimicsatid! Ku billow 10 daqiiqo oo jimicsi khafiif ah ah ama xoogaa yar oo socod ah maalin walba deetona u siyaadi inyar-inyar xaddiga jimicsigaaga iyo muddadiisa.

Sidee u joogteeyaa?

Kuwani waa xeelado kugu caawinaya inaad billowdo jimicsi oo aad markaana joogteyso barnaamijkaaga jimicsi:

**Dooro wax aad jeceshahay samayntooda.** Hubi in ay jir ahaan kugu wacan tahay. Tusaale, dabbaasha ayaa u sahlan kala-goysyada tufta qaba.

**Hel saaxiib.** La jimicsiga saaxiib ama qof qaraabadaada ah wuxuu jimicsiga ka dhigi karaa mid shaaciro leh oo aadan ka caajisin. Ha kala duwanaadeen hawlahaada. Waxay u badan tahay in aadan ku caajisin kuna dhaawacmin jimicsigaaga haddii aad kala duwdo jimicsiyadaada. Maalin lugee, tan kale bushkuleeti wad, Tixgeli ciyaaridda qoob-ka-ciyaarka ama Isboortiga duurka, ama hawlaha joogtada ah sida fakuum-garaynta ama falidda cawska deydkaaga.

**Dooro maalinta waqti ku habboon.** Martkii aad wax sii cunaysayba ha billaabin jimicsi ama markay dibeddu aad u kulushahay ama u qabowdahay. Iska suig ilaa galabtii haddii aad subaxdii tigtigan tahay.

**Ha niyad jabin.** Waxay qaadan kartaa toddobaadyo ama bilo inta aadan waxtar ka dareemin jimicsigaaga, sida miisaan luma.

**Iska illow "xanuun la'aani waa faa'iido la'aan."** Xoogaa xanfaa ahi waa jirayaan marka ugu horraysa ee aad billowdid jimicsi, laakiin xanuun ma jiri karo. Bareeg qaado haddii aad xanuun dareentid ama dhaawacantid.

**Ku madadaalo jimicsiga.** Aqri, muusiq dhegayso ama TV fiirso marka aad wareejinaysid baaskiiladda fadhida, tusaale ahaan. Hel waxyaabo shaaciro leh oo aad samaysid sida adigoo beerta xayawaanka u lugeeya. Qoob ka ciyaar samee. Baro sida loo ciyaaro isboorti aad xiisaynayso, sida tenniska.

**Maalintaada ku dhex qari jimicsi**

Jaranjarada fuul meeshii wiishka

Yara lugee xilliga kafeega ama qadada aad u baxdid

U wada lugee ama qaar u lugee shaqada

## 5. Central Ohio Community Resources

### Police:

Emergency: 9-1-1  
Non-emergency: 614-645-4545  
Sheriff: 614-462-3333

### Mental Health Crisis:

Netcare Access: 614-276-2273

### Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222

Columbus Health Department  
Free Clinic: 614-240-7430

### Legal Matters:

Legal Aid Society: 614-241-2001

### Child Abuse and Neglect:

FCCS: 614-229-7000

### Housing:

CMHA: 614-421-6000

### Information and Referral:

HandsOn: 614-221-2555 or 211

### Somali Services

**SomaliCAN**  
614-489-9226  
[www.SomaliCAN.org](http://www.SomaliCAN.org)

The Omolesky Law Firm  
614-441-5305

## SOMALICAN SERVICES:

### Health Communication and Literacy:

- Patient education
- Prescription access
- Cultural competency training
- Information & Referral

### Community Education:

- Youth engagement
- Services in Schools
- Advocacy and Support
- Scholarships
- Annual Graduation
- Crime Prevention
- Disaster Preparedness

### SomaliCAN Outreach Newsletter:

- Monthly bilingual newsletter
- Advertisements
- Articles
- Cultural Competency
- Research
- Legislation
- Developmental Disabilities

### Immigration Services:

- Green card applications
- Citizenship applications
- Citizenship education

### Somali Interpretation & Translation:

Do you require highly qualified Somali interpreters and translators?

Please contact a SomaliCAN specialist today. SomaliCAN provides interpretation and translation in social services, medical, legal, academic and financial settings.

## SomaliCAN

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