

Autism

What's Inside...

- ◆ Definition
- ◆ Red flags: What should parents and caregivers be on the lookout for?
- ◆ Developmental Evaluations
- ◆ Special Education Services for young children
- ◆ Resources

While there is no doubt that overall awareness regarding Autism has increased, the sheer volume of information regarding Autism can be overwhelming. This bulletin seeks to compile the latest information in clear and brief terms as it relates to young children (0-5 years). Understanding Autism, recognizing red flags, accessing effective interventions, and supporting children with Autism is a continued focus and priority as we seek to include all individuals in our communities.

**Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass,
it is about learning to dance in the rain.**

Vivian Green

The CDC defines Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as a group of developmental disabilities that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. Recent data from the CDC states that numbers of children diagnosed with Autism have been rising over the past decade, and that currently 1 in 68 children are identified as having Autism. However, Autism is a spectrum disorder, meaning there is a wide range of characteristics and needs included in the diagnosis. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged. Some people with ASD need a lot of help in their daily lives; others need less.

IF YOU'VE MET
one
CHILD
WITH
autism,
you've met
one
CHILD
WITH
autism.

Signs and Symptoms

Children with Autism might repeat certain behaviors and might resist change in their daily activities. Many kids with ASD also have different ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things. Signs of ASD begin during early childhood and typically last throughout a person's life. Take note if you notice a child who:

- Does not point to show interest
- Does not look when someone else points
- Shows little interest in others
- Avoids eye contact
- Has difficulty understanding feelings
- Prefers not to be held or cuddled (may on their own terms)
- Appears unaware when people talk to them
- Repeats/echoes words and phrases
- Has difficulty expressing their needs using typical words or motions
- Does not engage in pretend play
- Repeats actions over and over
- Struggles to adapt with changes in routine
- Over-reacts or under-reacts to the way things smell, taste, look, feel, or sound
- Loses a skill they once had, particularly language

SOURCE: CDC.GOV

A child who exhibits some of these signs may not have Autism. However, it is important to rule out Autism, or another cause for these symptoms, such as hearing loss, or another developmental delay. Early Intervention services are available and shown to be very effective in improving the lives of children with development disabilities, including ASD. The CDC states that a child can sometimes be diagnosed with Autism at eighteen months of age or younger, but by the age of 2 a diagnosis is considered very reliable. Early diagnosis and intervention is key.

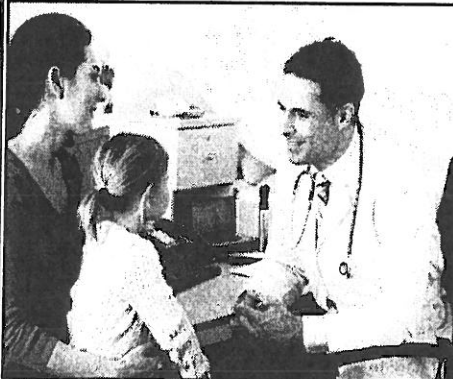
If a parent suspects Autism, what should they do?

- Talk to your child's caregiver; ask them if they've noticed any of the signs and symptoms listed on page 1
- Talk to your child's pediatrician
- Pediatricians conduct developmental screenings at 9 months, 18 months, and 24 or 30 months of age; a parent can request a screening specific to Autism Spectrum Disorder from their pediatrician at any time
- If your child's pediatrician suspects Autism Spectrum Disorder, they will refer you to a specialist who can conduct a developmental evaluation and consider a possible diagnosis
- Even if your child's pediatrician does not think an evaluation is necessary, but you continue to have concerns, parents have a right to refer their child for an evaluation
- If your child is between 0-3 years of age *and* receives special education services through Early Intervention (EI) (i.e. special education teacher services, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and/or physical therapy), talk to your child's service providers and EI Service Coordinator about your concerns, *and* ask about a referral for a Developmental Evaluation
- If your child is 3-5 years old and receives services through the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) at your school district (i.e. special education teacher services, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and/or physical therapy), talk to your child's team and the CPSE Chairperson about your concerns and ask about a referral for a Developmental Evaluation
- **CALL the Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) 315-443-4444! We can guide you through this process!!**

Who can diagnosis?

- **Developmental Pediatricians** (doctors who have special training in child development and children with special needs)
- **Child Neurologists** (doctors who work on the brain, spine, and nerves)
- **Child Psychologists or Psychiatrists** (doctors who know about the human mind)

SOURCE: CDC.GOV

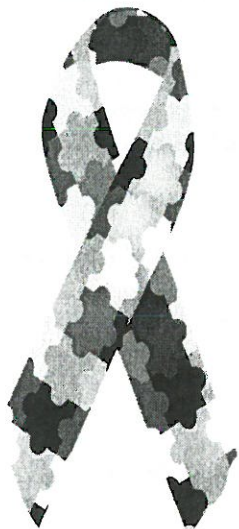


Parents are experts!

Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, founder of Touchpoints, states that parents are the experts of their child's behavior. Parents are vital members of any team evaluating or treating their child, and can and should provide information and ask questions throughout the process.

My child has been referred for a Developmental Evaluation. What can I expect?

- You may receive checklists, regarding your child's behavior to fill out ahead of time
- If your child is in a school or childcare setting, their teacher(s) may also fill out checklists ahead of time
- At the evaluation, different members of the evaluation team will ask specific questions about your child
- At the evaluation, different members of the evaluation team will interact with your child, through play, conversation, and by administering standardized tests
- Following the evaluation, someone from the evaluation team will discuss the results with you, and will share any diagnosis that has been assigned as a result of testing, observation, and interview
- If you have a EI Service Coordinator (for kids age 0-3 years), talk to him/her about how the diagnosis impacts an existing Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), or if an IFSP will be written, and if any special education services will be added or changed
- If your child is preschool aged (3-5 years), and already receives some special education services through the Committee of Preschool Special Education (CPSE), a CPSE meeting will be scheduled to discuss the evaluation results and any impact they may have on levels of service in preschool
- If your child is preschool aged, but does not receive any special education services through CPSE, talk to the evaluation team about if the evaluation results will qualify your child to receive special education services under CPSE through your school district
- * Developmental Evaluations can be long, overwhelming, and stressful for you and your child! Tell your child you understand it may be hard for them, and allow time to process, unwind, and relax after the evaluation concludes. Recognize your need for support during this process as well and take care of your own needs!!



EI versus CPSE

Early Intervention (EI) is for kids 0-3 years, and provided through your county's department of health.

Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) is for kids 3-5 years and is provided through your school district.



Does an Autism diagnosis mean my child will automatically receive special education services?

- Not necessarily:
- In NYS, a child between ages 0-3 years, with an ASD diagnosis, is eligible to receive early intervention services because diagnosed conditions that are highly likely to affect development warrant eligibility under early intervention. SOURCE: WWW.HEALTH.NY.GOV
- In order to receive special education services, preschool aged children (3-5), must exhibit a "significant delay or disability in one or more functional areas related to cognitive, language and communication, adaptive, socio-emotional, or motor development which adversely affects the students ability to learn." SOURCE: WWW.P12.NYSED.GOV
- In preschool, children need to be evaluated in each of the above areas, and qualify for services if standardized test scores fall 2.0 standardized deviations below the mean in one area, or 1.5 standardized deviations below the mean in two or more areas. (approximately a 33% delay in one area or a 25% delay in two areas).
- A developmental evaluation may include assessment in each of the areas, and therefore may result in meeting eligibility requirements for a preschooler.
- If the developmental evaluation does not cover each of the above areas, your child may need to have a preschool evaluation through your child's school district to look at the remaining areas for possible eligibility.
- For kids aged 3-5 years, who do not yet receive any special education services, parents should start by calling the school district to ask for an initial evaluation that may or may not include a developmental evaluation component.

Description of possible special education services:

Special Instruction (SI): a special education teacher who works with a child between birth and age 3 one-on-one or in a small group for 30 or 60 minutes sessions 1 or more times a week; Special education teachers work on play skills, interaction skills, concepts, and cognitive skills

Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT): - a special education teacher who works with a preschool aged child one-on-one or in a small group for 60 minute sessions 2 or more times a week

Special Class Integrated Setting (SCIS):- an inclusive preschool classroom with a ratio of students with IEPs to typical peers of at least 50/50; a special education teacher leads the classroom and supports are imbedded throughout the day.

Speech Therapy: speech therapists and pathologists work on communication skills, including using sign language, words, or assistive technology devices. They focus on improving articulation (sounds of words), expressive and receptive language skills, and social language skills

Occupational Therapy: occupational therapists work on improving sensory processing, feeding issues, and fine motor skills (dexterity, writing, scissors, etc.)

Physical Therapy: physical therapists work on balance, coordination, strengthening, large muscle groups, and gross motor skills (using stairs, walking, jumping, etc.)

Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA): a technique that uses positive rewards to increase useful behaviors and reduce harmful ones or ones that impede learning.

Developmental Individual Differences Relationship-based (DIR) Floortime: a relationship based technique that follows the child's interests to help increase social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

"Autism, is part of my child, it's not everything he is. My child is so much more than a diagnosis.

-S.L. Coelho, *The World According to August-One Good Friend*

**Autism doesn't define a person;
Guess who else has an ASD diagnosis**

Susan Boyle, Britain's Got Talent Finalist
James Durbin, American Idol Finalist
Albert Einstein
Daryl Hannah, actress
Ladyhawke, Indie Musician
Matt Savage, Jazz prodigy
Clay Marzo, Professional Surfer
Danny Beath, Award Winning landscape & wild life
photographer
Heather Kuzmich, American's Next Top Model finalist
Dan Akroyd, actor
Courtney Love, rock star
Satoshi Tajiri, Pokemon creator
John Elder Robison, author

SOURCES

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LOCAL RESOURCES

- The Central New York Chapter of the Autism Society of America (CNYASA): (315) 447-4466; cnyasa@yahoo.com
- Central New York Autism Support Group: (315) 798-4006 ext. 372; leslie.stephens@upstatecp.org
- Oswego County Autism Task Force: oswegoautism@yahoo.com; <http://oswegocountyautism.org/>
- Families for Effective Autism Treatment (FEAT) of CNY: (315) 559-3823; info@featofcny.org; featofcny.org

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**WHILE WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN,
THEY TEACH US.**



**Over 35 Years
Caring for All Children**

Workshops of Interest

The ECDC can provide information and workshops on a variety of topics tailored to the interests and needs of parents and early childhood professionals. Resources are available on such topics as general child development, developmental issues for children with special needs, coping strategies, and specific disabilities.

Workshops include:

- Including All Kids
- Parent Partnerships
- Developmentally Appropriate Practices
- Early Childhood Development: The Meaning of Red Flags
- Supporting Social Emotional Development
- Challenging Behavior
- Moving On: Transitioning Families (EI-CPSE) & (CPSE-CSE)
- What Are Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education?
- What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?
- Writing IEP Goals
- Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Who We Are

The Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) is a regional technical assistance center for the State Education Department providing information, referral and support to families, professionals, and community agencies concerned with young children birth to five. We are located at Syracuse University's Center on Human Policy.

**ECDC services to families are
free and confidential.**

ECDC Staff

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Laura Glover, Preschool Behavior Specialist
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Cyndy Colavita, Office Coordinator
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resources