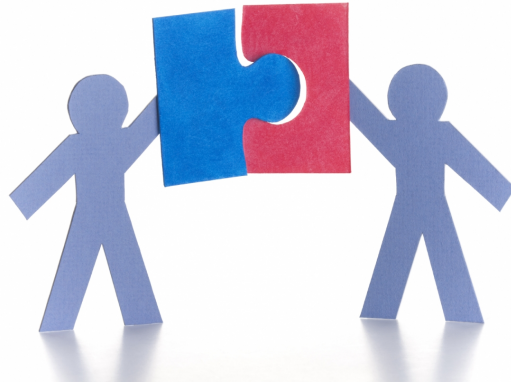


Autism Spectrum Disorders

Information and
Resources for Educators
and Families



*Brought to you by the Ohio
School Psychologists
Association and:*

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What are the Autism Spectrum Disorders?

The autism spectrum disorders (ASD) include autism, Asperger syndrome, and pervasive development disorder – not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS).

Autism is the most impairing disorder on the spectrum, though the degree of functioning and impairment will vary among individuals. Autism is characterized by impairments in communication, social interactions, and restricted

behaviors. Delays will be apparent at a very young age, with most children being diagnosed at preschool age.

Asperger syndrome is characterized by impairments in social interactions and restricted interests. Children with Asperger syndrome do not have early communication delays and have average to above average intelligence. They may not be identified as early as children with autism.

PDD-NOS indicates impairment in socialization, and impairment in one of the other two areas – communication or restricted behaviors. PDD-NOS does not meet the diagnostic criteria for autism.

Children with autism are more likely to have **co-morbid** disorders, including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, anxiety, and/or obsessive-compulsive behaviors.

Snapshot

1. The three domains of impairment that characterize autism are communication, social skills, and restricted behaviors. Children on the spectrum may also have limited interests.
2. ASD is a lifelong disorder, but early identification and early intervention are critical to improving outcomes.



April is Autism Awareness Month!

What to Expect in the School Setting

Learning

Each individual child will have personal strengths and weaknesses that affect the way they learn and retain information. Generally speaking, children on the lower end of the spectrum will have below average intelligence and may even be non-verbal. Children with such significant impairments may require a specialized classroom where intensive interventions and a highly structured environment can be provided. Children with Asperger syndrome and PDD-NOS are likely to have average to above average intelligence and have fewer difficulties learning. They will likely spend most or all of the school day with their typical peers.

Social Interactions

Children on the spectrum have difficulty interpreting social situations and behaviors. They may not understand behaviors like turn taking and have difficulty understanding other people's emotions. They may also have trouble maintaining eye contact and engaging in a reciprocal conversation. In school, this may result in a lack of friendships and behaviors that seem be inappropriate to the situation.



While there is no known cure for Autism, there are many interventions and strategies available to help maximize children's potential.

Possible Areas for

Intervention:

- Attention
- Communication
- Socialization
- Cognition
- Behavior
- Important Life Skills

(Autism Service Guidelines Revision Committee, n.d)

Communication:

Children with ASD may have a wide range of communication needs. Some children with ASD may benefit from speech therapy services. In addition, some children may be nonverbal and may use different means of communication such as with augmentative and alternative

Interventions and Supports

communication systems.

For information about AAC devices please visit:

<http://www.aacandautism.com/>

Children with ASD may be able to use concrete language, but may have difficulty with abstract concepts (Autism Service Guidelines Revision Committee, n.d).

Socialization:

Children with ASD may benefit from participating in social skills groups and from having peer models. Other effective interventions and strategies include rehearsal (scripting, modeling, & practice), and role playing (Autism Service Guidelines Revision Committee, n.d). It is essential that social skills be taught and reinforced in all settings, to help ensure that the students' skills generalize across settings.

Behavior:

Children with ASD may display challenging behavior due to environmental influences and certain characteristics of ASD such as stress/anxiety, physiological factors, or sensory sensitivities (Autism Service Guidelines Revision Committee, n.d). In order to plan appropriate interventions, one should determine the function of the behavior. Conducting a functional behavior assessment to examine the antecedents and consequences of the behavior can help identify the function. Positive behavioral interventions can be used to modify the environment and teach appropriate alternative behaviors.

Sensory Motor Processing:

Children with ASD may have over or under responsiveness, or mixed responsiveness to sensory stimuli, and may benefit from sensory supports (Autism Service Guidelines Revision Committee, n.d). *The Service Guidelines for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders Through the Lifespan* identifies numerous strategies to help children who have difficulties in this area. The authors also recommend consulting with a professional who is knowledgeable in this area, such as an Occupational Therapist.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES****Websites/Organizations:****Autism Speaks:**

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/>

The Autism Center at OCALI:

<http://www.ocali.org/center/autism>

The Autism Society:

<http://www.autism-society.org/>

The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders:

<http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/>

Books for Parents & Educators

Barton, E. & Harn, B. (2012). *Educating young children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Rogers, S. & Dawson, G. (2012). *An early start for your child with Autism: Using everyday activities to help kids connect, communicate and learn*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Sansosti, F.J., Powell-Smith, K.A., Cowan, R.J. (2010). *High-functioning Autism/Asperger syndrome in schools: Assessment and intervention*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Smith, T. (2011). *Making inclusion work for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: An evidence-based guide*. New York, NY: Guilford

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- Autism Service Guidelines Revision Committee. (n.d). Service guidelines for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder through the lifespan. Retrieved from http://www.ocali.org/project/asd_service_guidelines.
- Ruble, L. A., & Akshoomoff, N. (2010). *Autism spectrum disorders: Identification and diagnosis*. Retrieved from <http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq/38/8/pdf>