

Information for Parents Regarding Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

“Students with disabilities are disproportionately affected by bullying. Students with learning disabilities, attention deficit or hyperactivity disorder, and autism are more likely to be bullied than their peers.”

– US Department of Education’s Office of Special Education, Dr. Melody Musgrove, 2013

Differences in processing and social skills, or intolerant environments may increase the risk of a student being bullied. Students may not understand the extent to which bullying behaviors are harmful, and may not be able to make their situation known to an adult. (OSERS 2013)

Early Signs of Autism in Children:

- Speaks later or not at all (non-speaking)
- Repeating the same word or sounds, hand flapping or pacing
- Avoiding eye contact, giving few facial expressions, or speaking flatly
- Prefers to play alone rather than engaging in play with other children
- Extremely distressed by changes, including new foods or changes in schedule
- Preference for predictable, structured play over spontaneous or make-believe play
- Strong, persistent interest on specific topic, part of a toy, or item

What To Do If Your Child Is Showing Signs of ASD

- It is important to discuss with your child’s doctor about the developmental concerns you are seeing in your child. The Autism Society promotes early identification and access to effective treatments before age three.
- Characteristics of ASD can be seen as early as 18 months, and parents should voice concerns to their doctor. Early diagnosis of autism can reduce lifetime care costs by two-thirds, as it allows parents, therapists and others to begin treatments sooner.
- Learning as much as possible about autism and its community is vital at this point in your child’s life. Visit the [CDC’s Learn the Signs, Act Early](#) for more information.

Who Can Diagnose ASD

If your child shows any symptoms of ASD, make an appointment to have them evaluated by a child psychiatrist, psychologist, pediatric neurologist, or developmental pediatrician. While your child is on a waitlist for an evaluation, you can enroll them in speech, occupational, or physical therapy to address developmental delays.

To find a list of providers who evaluate autism you can visit www.as-az.org, email info@as-az.org or call **520-770-1541**.



Considerations for Schooling:

- Consider an IEP Plan. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a plan that determines the special education services, supports and accommodations that a student may benefit from. A child-centered plan organized through your school decreases probable trauma associated with IEPs.
- Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), your child is entitled to a “free appropriate public education” in the “least restrictive environment” available. Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) is available to disabled students to provide extra funding for alternative education.

To prepare for educational transition and IEP team meetings.

- Make a list of your child’s strengths and challenges, make note of strategies you know to be successful with your child, organize your child’s records (PACER Center mental health folder <https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c155.pdf>)

While assembling educational resources, consider:

- What supports and services will my child need?
- How will the school staff help my child continue to develop and learn?
- Who will inform other teachers and staff about my child’s needs and supports?
- Does the IEP team have new ideas for setting academic goals and objectives for my child? Children may lose important classroom time when their behavior gets in the way of learning.
- Does the IEP team have tips I can implement at home during this transition?
- Who will assist with my child’s verbal communication needs?

Regardless of your child’s needs, there are tools and resources to assist you in supporting your child’s education. Autistic children can be extremely successful in traditional educational environments.

