



Fact Sheet

Does my child have an Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) affects as many as 1 in 110 children. It is a neurological based disorder with a broad spectrum of characteristics. The characteristics of an ASD can look very different at different ages but early signs of an ASD can be seen in children as young as 3 months. Children may display differences with communication, socialization and repetitive behaviors. Characteristics of children who are at-risk may include:

Communication

- Your child has limited speech or repeats words over and over; no single words by 16 months
- Your child has a lack of non-verbal communication such as waving or pointing
- Your child seems to be in his/her “own world”; doesn’t always seem to hear

Social Interaction

- Your child doesn’t respond to his name at 9 months
- Your child doesn’t point or “show” you things at 18 months
- Your child has poor eye contact, may even avoid eye contact

Stereotypical and Repetitive Behaviors

- Your child may seem to get “stuck” on things and have a hard time moving on to other things; resistance to change
- Your child doesn’t seem to know how to play with toys; may fixate on one part of a toy
- Your child has repetitive body movements

Additionally, other concerns parents indicate ‘early on’ may include feeding issues and/or gastrointestinal problems. Parents of infants often report that it was difficult to find a formula the baby would tolerate. As the child ages, children’s food preferences are often restricted to a limited variety of foods specifically related to texture or taste. Also, sleeping habits may be greatly affected. Children may also process and respond to sensory stimuli differently. For example, some children may have a high tolerance to pain. These are a few examples that have been reported by parents who have children that have been diagnosed with an ASD.

Please note: If you recognize any of the characteristics mentioned, it does not mean your child has an autism spectrum disorder. It does mean you should seek further evaluation.

If you notice that your young child displays any of the characteristics above, it is important that you talk to your pediatrician or seek out a developmental pediatrician for a screening for an ASD. A screening is an assessment that will help determine whether or not referral on for further evaluation for an ASD is needed.

What is the referral process like?

In Illinois, referrals are made to Child and Family Connections. Child and Family Connections is part of a statewide system that is responsible for ensuring that all referrals of children under the age of three receive a timely response. Child and Family Connections will help families with children between birth and age three to obtain evaluations and assessments. They will help determine eligibility for early intervention services. If eligible, an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) will be developed to help a child learn, grow and receive needed services.

Benefits of Early Intervention

Early intervention programs provide support to children, parents and families as a whole. These supports may be in the form of learning activities or other structured experiences that affect a child directly or have indirect effects through training parents or other caregivers in the environment. Early intervention services increases developmental and academic gains for the child, improves functioning of the family and reaps long-term benefits.

Resources for early detection of Autism Spectrum Disorders

Website

Easter Seals: www.easterseals.com

American Academy Pediatrics: www.aap.org

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov

First Signs: www.firstsigns.org

Books

Maurice, C., Green, G., & Luce, S. (1996). *Behavioral Intervention for Young Children with Autism: A manual for Parents and Professionals*. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Illinois Specific

Illinois Early Intervention Training Program: www.illinoiseittraining.org

Phone: 1-866-509-3867

Child & Family Connections: www.childandfamilyconnections.org

Phone: 1-888-594-8364



**ILLINOIS AUTISM/PDD
TRAINING AND TECHNICAL
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