

FACT SHEET



Autism

What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurological disorder characterized by “impairment in reciprocal social communication and social interaction, and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities” (APA, 2013). The term “autism spectrum” is often used because there are many diagnoses that fall “on the autism spectrum”, which used to be treated as separate diagnoses including autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), and Asperger’s syndrome. All of these conditions are now considered to be within the autism spectrum and are called ASD.

"Autism" means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three that adversely affects a child's educational performance and may limit and impair everyday functioning. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term shall not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance (K.A.R. 91-40-1(f)).

Autism is a disorder that occurs across a spectrum, each individual identified with autism can be very different than another individual identified with ASD.

In 2013, the DSM-V replaced the DSM-IV. In the new Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, the category of Pervasive Developmental Disorders was replaced with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This change has eliminated

all the sub-diagnosis that appeared in the earlier manual.

Clinical Diagnosis and Educational Identification

There are two different categories for identification of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), clinical and educational. Educators, service providers and care providers need to be aware of the differences between a clinical diagnosis and an educational identification of ASD. A clinical licensed health care professional may only give a clinical diagnosis of autism. An educational identification may be given by a multidisciplinary team of professionals in collaboration with the parent or caregiver for the student. Having one does not guarantee the identification of the other.

It is important to note, that a child may have a clinical diagnosis and not be eligible for special education services or, the child may be identified as being eligible for special education services under the IDEA definition of Autism and not have a clinical diagnosis of ASD.



Autism

Characteristics of Autism in Babies and Toddlers

- by 6 months, no social smiles or other warm, joyful expressions directed at people;
- by 6 months, limited or no eye contact;
- by 9 months, no sharing of vocal sounds, smiles or other nonverbal communication;
- by 12 months, no babbling;
- by 12 months, no use of gestures to communicate (e.g. pointing, reaching, waving etc.);
- by 12 months, no response to name when called;
- by 16 months, no words;
- by 24 months, no meaningful, two-word phrases; and
- any loss of any previously acquired speech, babbling or social skills.

Characteristics of Autism at Any Age

- avoids eye contact and prefers to be alone;
- struggles with understanding other people's feelings;
- remains nonverbal or has delayed or unusual language development;
- repeats words or phrases over and over (echolalia);
- gets upset by minor changes in routine or surroundings;
- has highly restricted interests;
- performs repetitive behaviors such as flapping, rocking or spinning; and
- has unusual and often intense reactions to sounds, smells, tastes, textures, lights and/or colors.

The statistics around ASD are shifting dramatically, 20 years ago more than 70% of those identified with ASD were also identified with an intellectual disability (ID), today, the percentages have flipped, with 70% of those identified with ASD having no intellectual disability at all. (Autism Speaks, 2019)

Resources

Kansas Special Education Process Handbook <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=598>

KSDE Eligibility Indicators <https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/SES/misc/iep/EligibilityIndicators.pdf>

KSDE SETS <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=506>

Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN) <https://ksdetasn.org/atbs>

American Psychiatric Association (APA). (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed). Arlington, VA: Author.

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

Autism Speaks <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>

OSEP Fast Facts: Children Identified with Autism https://sites.ed.gov/idea/osep-fast-facts-children-with_autism-20/

For more information, contact:

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