



## Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) Fact Sheet

- **One in 110 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and the number of cases of autism now surpasses that of all types of cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined.** In the US 730,000 individuals birth -21 years of age are living with ASDs. If 4 million children are born in the United States every year, approximately 36,500 children will eventually be diagnosed with ASDs. (CDC, 2009)
- Autism is a neurobiological developmental disability that impacts the areas of social interaction and communication skills, such as verbal and non-verbal communication, leisure and play skills and repetitive/restricted interests (Autism Society of America).
- Autistic disorders are diagnosed along a spectrum; each ASD has a specific set of characteristics used as criteria for diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM IV) of the American Psychiatric Association. The most common diagnoses include:
  1. **Autism:** Individuals with autism often have difficulty in the developmental areas of communication, socialization and repetitive/restricted interests and behaviors.
  2. **Asperger's Syndrome:** individuals with Asperger's Syndrome may exhibit similar characteristics to autism but do not have a significant delay in language. Some may have an above normal to high intelligence with intense interests.
  3. **Pervasive Developmental Disorder- Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS):** This term is used when an individual displays developmental deficits but does not meet diagnostic criteria for a other diagnoses.
- Individuals with ASDs *may* have comorbid diagnoses such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), learning disabilities, visual and hearing impairments, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), anxiety disorders, seizures or mental retardation.
- ASDs are on average four to five times more likely to occur in boys than in girls. (CDC, 2009)
- Research shows the potential for progress is very good with early intervention. Individuals with ASDs should be engaged in functional and appropriate activities as much as possible. In 2001, the National Research Council Report recommended a minimum of 25 hours per week and the American Academy of Pediatrics (2007) recommends 20 hours or more of active engagement in evidence-based interventions.
- Interventions based on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), such as Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT), Discrete Trial Training (DTT), Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS), and Incidental Teaching are supported by the most scientific evidence.
- With effective interventions, family involvement, and community based support, individuals with ASDs and their families can live meaningful and productive lives with varying levels of assistance.

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The Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC) is a nonprofit, community-based organization dedicated to autism research, education and resources for children and young adults with autism and their families. SARRC undertakes self-directed and collaborative research projects, serves as a satellite site for national and international projects, and provides up-to-date information, training and assistance to families and professionals about autism and related disorders. For more information about SARRC, please call (602) 340-8717 or visit [www.autismcenter.org](http://www.autismcenter.org).