



### IDEA: Categories of Disabilities -- Autism

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines Autism as:

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. 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.

#### What is Autism?

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication, as well as by unique strengths and differences. We now know that there is not one autism but many types, caused by different combinations of genetic and environmental influences.

The ASD includes: Autism, Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), Asperger Syndrome (AS), Rett Syndrome, Childhood Disintegration Disorder.

#### What are the signs of Autism?

The earliest signs of autism are the **absence** of behaviors that are typically seen in the first year of life and can be easy to miss such as an infant who does not respond to a parent's smile or does not respond as often as other infants.

The characteristics or symptoms typically shown in early childhood including social interaction (relating to other people, things, and events), communication (using and understanding language), and behavior (repetitive and challenging).

No two individuals with ASD are exactly alike, and they exhibit a wide range of functional abilities. Some will exhibit all of the signs, while others might demonstrate only a few of the signs. The severity of the signs will range from one person to another.

*This information is not meant to diagnose any child and should not take the place of consultation with a qualified healthcare professional.*

The contents of this fact sheet were developed, in part, under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, #H328M140010. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, David Emenheiser.

This fact sheet is funded, in part, by a contract with the Oklahoma State Department of Education—Special Education Services (OSDE-SES). Views expressed in this fact sheet do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the OSDE.



Office of Special Education Programs  
U.S. Department of Education



OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION  
CHAMPION EXCELLENCE

**Where to call for a free evaluation from the state depends on your child's age:**

#### Under Three (3) Years Old

Contact SoonerStart Early Intervention Services at 405-521-3351

<http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/2013%20Referral%20Guide%20back.pdf>

#### Three (3) Years Old and Older

Contact your local public school system.

[www.ok.gov/sde/state-school-directory](http://www.ok.gov/sde/state-school-directory)

*Even if your child is not yet old enough for kindergarten or enrolled in a public school, call your local elementary school and ask to speak with someone who can help you have your child evaluated.*

If you're not sure who to contact, call the

**Oklahoma Parents Center**  
toll-free at  
877-553-4332  
and we can help you!

\*\*\* \*\*

Source:

*Autism Spectrum Disorders, Oklahoma State Department of Education.*

*What is Autism?, Oklahoma Autism Network.*

*Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Center for Disease Control and Prevention.*