

## Autism Spectrum Disorder: The Role Of The Individualized Education Program Team

By: Connie Limon The fastest growing diagnosis within the disability of Pervasive Developmental Disorders is Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder are from all socioeconomic groups, as well as cultural, racial, and ethnic populations. More students with Autism Spectrum Disorder will be found in every community and neighborhood due to the increased identification of the disorder. Estimated annual cost of educating and caring for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder is to be around 90 billion dollars according to the Autism Society of America. Early diagnosis and intervention is a key factor in reducing treatment costs by two-thirds.

There are five related developmental disorders placed under the umbrella category of Pervasive Developmental Disorders. They include:

1. Autism Spectrum Disorder
2. Asperger's Syndrome
3. Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
4. Rett's
5. Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified

### Specific Aspects of Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Autism Spectrum Disorder affects the neurodevelopment system. The results are distinct learning and behavior characteristics
- Autism Spectrum Disorder has an underlying biological/genetic cause that produces organic and/or physical changes during brain development. This results in atypical cognitive and social development and behaviors
- Autism Spectrum Disorder affects individuals uniquely
- Autism Spectrum Disorder does not result from poor parenting
- Autism Spectrum Disorder affects the individual's ability to integrate sensory information and regulate their emotions

There are five deficit areas to consider as diagnostic criteria for identifying individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, they are:

1. Communication
2. Socialization/Social skills
3. Restricted interests
4. Sensory integration
5. Behavior

Individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder exhibit varying degrees of difficulties in these five areas.

Recent research shows students with Autism Spectrum Disorder exhibit the same early symptoms that include:

- Lack of eye contact
- Lack of joint attention (attention to the same item or topic as another person)
- Atypical sensory/motor processing

### Goals and Objectives for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The general education teacher must ensure that students with Autism Spectrum Disorder have goals and objectives designed to promote the development of independent living, academic skills, and appropriate social behaviors and skills.

It is essential that these goals be introduced early and addressed annually in the individualized education program. If these goals are not addressed until the child reaches secondary school, there is a higher potential for many students with Autism Spectrum Disorder leaving school not able to live independently, succeed academically or be gainfully employed.

In order to help provide a smooth transition to a post-high school setting, the responsibilities of the IEP (individualized education program) team may include:

- Developing goals and short-term objectives that promote self-monitoring and independent living skills

Secondary individualized education program teams have the responsibility to identify the long-term supports these students will require for academic, economic and social independence. They must ensure students with Autism Spectrum Disorder have long-term goals that specify the need for explicit instruction in the essential social skills necessary for all post-secondary academic, social, and/or vocational settings. Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder must be given multiple opportunities in a variety of social, academic, and vocational contexts to practice these skills.

Of highest priority is ensuring that students with Autism Spectrum Disorder acquire the essential social and daily living skills they need for a responsible integration into the community.

Transition Goals and Objectives of the Individualized Education Program team may include:

- Providing students with Autism Spectrum Disorder vocational and career exploration
- Experiences to assist them with learning which careers or college majors can accommodate their uneven academic and/or social development while at the same time utilizing their unique abilities and interests
- Opportunities to acquire vocational and/or work-related behaviors and skills required for successful employment and/or educational settings

Source: The Autism Society of America

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### About the Author

Written by: Connie Limon. Visit us at <http://www.about-autism.info> for more information about Autism Spectrum Disorder.

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