

Autism Services Program – Autism Fact Sheet

- Autism is a complex neurological disorder that affects each individual differently. Symptoms can be mild to severe and therefore is referred to as a spectrum disorder. The disorder primarily affects the normal functioning of the brain, impacting development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills and is often paired with unusual behaviors and interests. It is sometimes referred to as Early Infantile Autism or Childhood Autism,
- Autism spectrum disorders include Autistic Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Rett’s disorder and Asperger’s Disorder. These developmental disabilities typically appear during the first three years and continue throughout life (www.nichcy.org/pubs/factshe/fs20txt.htm).
- “Dr. Leo Kanner, a physician at Johns Hopkins Hospital, published the first paper describing autism in 1943. Although autism has been recognized as a medical condition only in modern times, there are many historical accounts pointing to the existence of autism well before the 20th century.” (<http://www.jhsph.edu/CADDE/Facts/autism.html>)
- There is no known cause of autism. Some believe several genes, as well as environmental factors such as viruses or chemicals, contribute to the disorder.
- “Studies of individuals with autism have found abnormalities in several regions of the brain, including the cerebellum, amygdale, hippocampus, septum and mamillary bodies. Neurons in these regions appear smaller than normal and have stunted nerve fibers. These abnormalities suggest that autism results from disruption of normal brain development early in fetal development.” (http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/disorders/autism_fact_sheet.shtml)
- “There are no definitive biologic signs or symptoms of Autism and it is diagnosed only based on careful observation/ assessment of behavior and knowledge of the individual’s developmental history. There is no medical test that can diagnose autism.” (<http://www.jhsph.edu/CADDE/Facts/autism.html>)
- Autism affects males about four times as often as females, and has been found throughout the world in people of all racial and social backgrounds.
- According to the Center for Disease and Control, “autism is the fastest growing developmental disability, yet it receives less than 5% research funding of most of the more prevalent childhood disorders.” (www.generationrescue.org)

- “Prevalence rates in 2007 reported that 1 in 150 children have Autism Spectrum Disorder. Current rates for children in Maryland are 1 in 142.” (www.pathfindersforautism.org)
- Individuals with autism may exhibit some of the following traits: Insistence on sameness; resistance to change; difficulty in expressing needs; using gestures or pointing instead of using words; repetition of words or phrases in place of normal responsive language; laughing (and/or crying) for no apparent reason; showing distress for reasons not apparent to others; preference to be alone; aloof manner; tantrums; difficulty in mixing with others; not wanting to cuddle or be cuddled; little or no eye contact; unresponsive to normal teaching methods; sustained odd play; spinning objects; obsessive attachment to objects; apparent over-sensitivity or under-sensitivity to pain; no real fears or dangers; noticeable physical over-activity or extreme under-activity; uneven gross/fine motor skills; non-responsive to verbal cues, and often has difficulty paying attention. (http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_FAQ)
- “Children with Autism often have other associated problems that can include sensory impairment, gastrointestinal problems, sleep disturbances, and seizure disorders. At the same time about 5-10% of autistic individuals possess extraordinary savant skills such as drawing, math, music, or memory” (<http://www.autism.ca/misc.htm>).
- “Although there is no known cure for autism, early behavioral-based interventions can help children to better develop the communication and social skills needed to improve their functional abilities” (<http://www.jhsph.edu/CADDE/Facts/autism.html>).

Children with Autism in Maryland for 1999-2000 and 2007-2008
(*Child Count by Age Group*)

	Child Count in 1999-2000	Child Count in 2007-2008
Age 3-5	371	652
Age 6-11	1,245	3,007
Age 12-17	580	2,350
Age 18-21	108	336
Age 6-21	1,933	5,693
Age 3-21	2,304	6,345

(http://www.easterseals.com/autism/2009_Autism_Maryland_v1.pdf)