



# Autism Identification: How Early is Too Early?

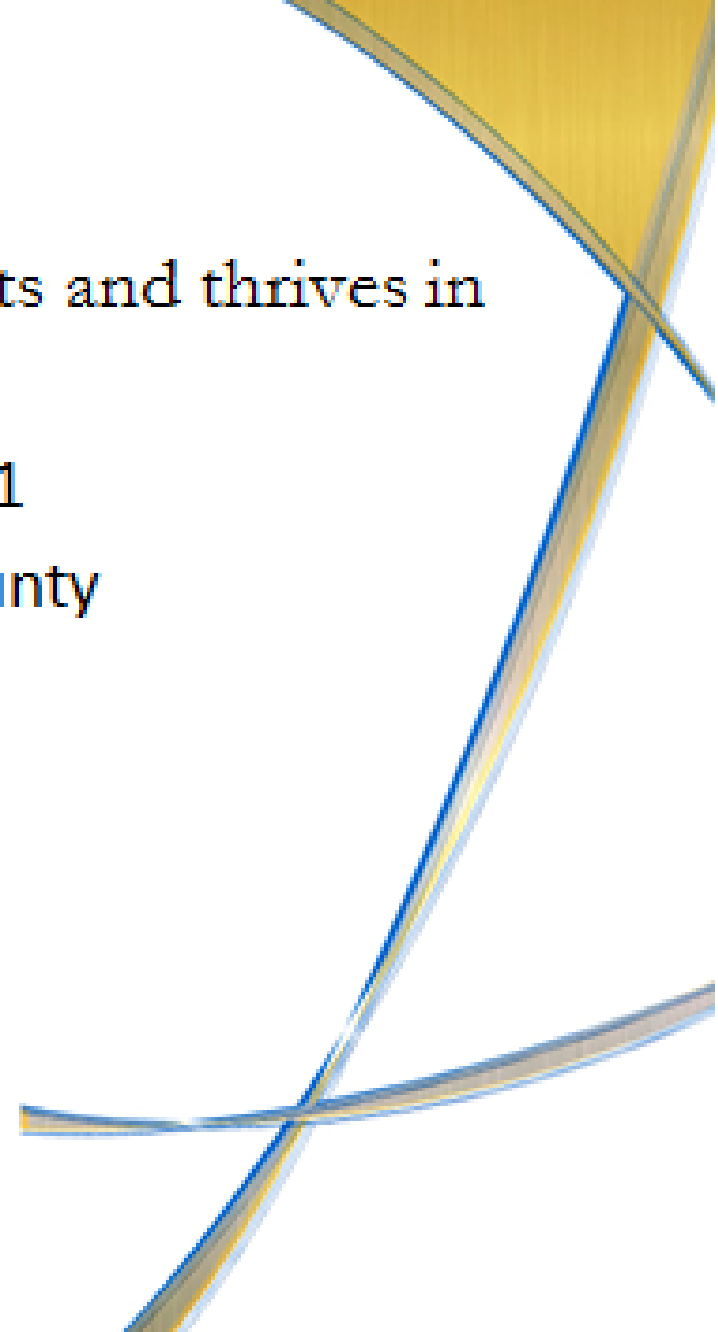
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# Las Cumbres Community Services:

Working for a world where every person connects and thrives in their community

- Serving families in Northern New Mexico since 1971
- This webinar series is sponsored by Los Alamos County
- Focus on children ages 0-6
- Parents and Community Professionals are welcome
- Therapists and Specialists will cover:
  - Frequently asked questions
  - Parenting Strategies





# According to the latest CDC definition.....

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"Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is defined as a group of behaviors indicating social, communicative, and behavioral impairment or abnormalities. The essential features of ASD are (a) impaired reciprocal social interactions, (b) delayed or unusual communication styles, and (c) restricted or repetitive behavior patterns."

Additionally, the current incidence is registered at 1 in 54 individuals have some level of ASD. (an ever-changing number) [www.cdc.gov/nbddd/autism/data.html](http://www.cdc.gov/nbddd/autism/data.html)

# Important to know.....

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- Autism is a complex developmental disability that can impact social skills, communicating and learning
- Some symptoms can show up as early as 6 months and others not until the child is older
- The symptoms can range from mild to severe and be changeable from day to day
  - Basically, their brain is wired differently, not wrongly, just differently
- Research is revealing that Early Intervention can help a child direct the trajectory of their future learning in a positive direction

# Screening and Identification

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## Early Markers/Subtle Differences

Some may argue that most neurotypical and atypical ASD at-risk infants/toddlers seem very similar. This can be true in some cases, however, there are a few “absolute indicators”, also known as ‘red flags’ that can suggest that a child may be at-risk for atypical development and should be evaluated.

If any of the following signs are noticed, a conversation with the family to request an immediate evaluation (or referral to an expert), should occur.



## "Red Flags"/Early Markers

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- No big smile nor other warm, joyful expressions when with people by six months or thereafter
- No back and forth sharing of sounds, smiles nor other facial expressions by nine months or thereafter -lack of 'relationship' development ...the "King Pin"
- No babbling by 12 months of age (typically can access 'mama'/'dada' by age 12 mo.)
- No words by 16 months
- No two-word meaningful phrases (without imitation nor repeating) by 24 months
- Any loss of speech, babbling or any other developmental skills, at any age

# Other possible signs to notice:

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- May have 'altered' eye contact (typically seeking eye contact between birth and 3 mo.)
- Might prefer to be alone or seem 'in their own world' - "doing their thing"
- Inappropriate/unusual attachment to objects - sustained or unusual play
- No real fear of danger
- May not follow objects nor people with their eyes
- Unusual reaction to pain (over or under reaction)
- Sensory seeking or avoiding actions (repetitive movements with body/objects, resisting touch, etc.)



- May resist cuddling
- May under or overreact to sounds ( i.e. no reaction to voice but fear the vacuum)
- Does not pay attention to strangers or new faces
- May not reach for objects (usually occurs by 8 months)
- May not stand when supported by 12 months - might be late to walk
- May not laugh or squeal at expected times
- Insistence on 'sameness'



# Video

## 5 Signs of ASD in Babies 2 years or younger...

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Play Close Attention to:

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Quality

vs

Quantity

# Why get a diagnosis???

(It's not just a label!)

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In a nutshell....access to funds!

---Early Therapies...access to designing the best course of treatment/training

---Pre-school support

---Additional school support

\* ASD is typically suspected around the age of 18-24 months but often can be identified at a younger age



# So... When is it TOO Early to Consider ASD?



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Never



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# “Environmental Soft Signs”

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At Home.....



At Day Care/Preschool



# Resources for Caregivers/and YOU

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## Books

### The Reason I Jump

By: Naoki Higashida

### Understanding Autism (for Dummies)

By: Stephen Shore/Linda Rastelli

### Finding Kansas

By: Aaron Likens

### Autism Spectrum Disorders in Infants and Toddlers

By: Chawarska, Klin, Volkmar

## Resources

[www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org)

Cari Ebert Seminars

Various autism blogs

CDC - lots of free handouts

[www.super-duper.com](http://www.super-duper.com)

Local School District

[www.autismlink.com](http://www.autismlink.com)

The Autism Navigator - videos

“Autism is not an illness. It's a different way of being human. Children with autism aren't sick; they are progressing through developmental stages as we all do. To help them, we don't need to change them or fix them. We need to work to understand them, and then change what *we* do.”

From: Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism  
by: Barry Prizant (2015)

# My Contact Information:

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# Ask a Specialist

Visit our webpage

- See upcoming workshops
- View past specialist discussions about child development
- Ask your question
  - Fill out form to ask your question and a specialist get your question answered

[www.LasCumbres-NM.org/Ask-A-Specialist](http://www.LasCumbres-NM.org/Ask-A-Specialist)