

# What is Autism?

A disorder commonly, but not always, diagnosed at an early age and is characterized by a lack of social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, and restricted and repetitive behavior. Autism is a spectrum, with individual abilities and needs varying widely. You don't "outgrow" autism, and you can't tell by looking at someone whether they are autistic or not.

## QUICK FACTS

**1%** of the World Population has been diagnosed with autism

**\$268 BILLION** is spent on autism-related services in the US each year

**AUTISM DIAGNOSIS RATE**  
1 out of 54 children

**1 in 6** people have a sensory need or sensitivity

**MILLIONS** of adults are autistic but were never formally diagnosed

**60k ANNUALLY** the average cost to a family with one autistic child

**600% INCREASE** autism is the *fastest* growing developmental disorder in the world

**Autism is a Spectrum**  
Autistic individuals have a variety of needs and abilities

**ASD** diagnosis increased in children by **119.4%** from 2000 to 2010

Boys are nearly **5X** more likely than girls to be diagnosed  
*(MANY AUTISTIC GIRLS ARE NOT DIAGNOSED OR ARE MISDIAGNOSED)*

## How to Communicate

- Keep your communication simple.
- Be gentle, persistent, and patient.
- Provide direct communication about social rules or expectations.
- Don't force eye contact or touch.
- Encourage special interests, but teach give-and-take in conversation.
- Demonstrate behaviors, allowing time for observation and reflection.
- Pay attention to non-verbal signals.
- Many individuals prefer the term "autistic" rather than "person with autism", but this can vary based on culture or personal preferences.

## Identifying Possible Signs of Autism

### SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL SIGNS:

- Lack of understanding of personal space /boundaries
- Different conversational skills or abilities
- Lack of typical displays of interest or emotion

### NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION SIGNS:

- Verbal communication may not match body language
- May not make direct eye contact
- Lack of understanding gestures
- Lack of facial expression

### REPETITIVE BEHAVIOR:

- Repetitive movements or speech, stimming
- Low tolerance for changes in routine
- Sensory sensitivity or overwhelm
- Big reaction, or no reaction, to sensory input

## What Does it Mean to Become a Certified Autism Center™?

A Certified Autism Center™ (CAC) has completed training for at least 80% of their staff. This autism sensitivity and awareness training ensures team members have the knowledge, skills, temperament, and training to interact with all families and children with special needs, specifically on the autism spectrum. Many Certified Autism Centers™ also undergo an onsite review by IBCCES experts to develop resources and programs to better serve guests with special needs.

### As a CAC, staff completed training on

- Autism Overview
- Sensory Impacts
- Communication
- Basic Safety
- Accessibility Needs
- Parent and Caregiver Perspective

### Who is your credentialing organization, IBCCES?

The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), was established in 2001 to meet the training & credentialing needs of professionals who work with individuals with special needs and cognitive disorders. IBCCES has since expanded autism training and certification into over 85 countries. The credentials are a testimony to a commitment to ongoing professional development in the field of autism.

*\*More information can be found about the program at [ibcces.org](http://ibcces.org)*