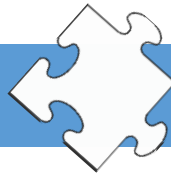


# FACTS ABOUT AUTISM



## AUTISM AFFECTS 1 IN 68 CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES AND 1 IN 64 IN ARIZONA<sup>1</sup>.

### WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and autism are both used as general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in<sup>2</sup>:

**Social Interactions**

**Verbal and Non-Verbal Communications**

**Repetitive Behaviors**

Symptoms of autism, as well as their severity, will vary greatly in each person on the autism spectrum.

Each and every person on the spectrum is very different. The saying goes:

*“If you know one person with autism, you know one person with autism.”*

### ARIZONA STATISTICS FOR ASD

**1 in 40 boys was identified<sup>1</sup>**

**1 in 167 girls was identified<sup>1</sup>**

While boys are 4 times more likely to be diagnosed, there may not be as much of discrepancy in occurrences as this data suggests as girls are less likely to be diagnosed even when their symptoms are equally severe<sup>3</sup>; and girls with high-functioning ASD tend to be clinically identified later than boys<sup>4</sup>.

Average age for diagnosis:

**Autistic disorder: 4 years, 10 months<sup>1</sup>**

**Pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS): 4 years, 7 months<sup>1</sup>**

**Asperger disorder: 6 years, 7 months<sup>1</sup>**

### FINANCIAL BURDENS TO FAMILIES

Children and adolescents with ASD had average medical expenditures that exceeded those without ASD by \$4,110-\$6,200 per year<sup>5</sup>. In addition to medical costs, intense behavioral interventions cost \$40,000-\$60,000 per year<sup>6</sup>.

### HOW TO HELP:

#### ACCEPTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING

As people on the spectrum can be overly sensitive to touch, movements, sights, and/or sounds, what you may be viewing as a tantrum in public is actually a sensory meltdown due to the environment's stimuli.

Err on the side of caution and show kindness (and patience) when you see a child losing it in public.

Empathy goes a long way!

Not all people on the spectrum will be savants in an area; they aren't Rain Man. While people on the spectrum are intelligent and talented in their own ways, please stop asking what their special talent is because they may not have one. Plus, it's just plain rude.

As parents of children on the spectrum, we have no idea what the future holds. Most of us are taking this one day at a time. It's scary and sometimes we don't want to talk about whether our kids will ever live on their own, taking care of themselves. Help us take it one day at a time by not asking us about tomorrow, next week, or next year.

We are just trying to get through today.

Offer friendship to those on the spectrum and those around them. Invite the child on the spectrum to your kid's next birthday party and ask the parents what you can do to help make him or her feel more comfortable there.

Just because it's difficult for some of them to make friends doesn't mean they don't want them.

Be kind. Always.

## HOW TO HELP: LOCAL SUPPORT

As stated previously, taking care of a child or an adult on the spectrum is incredibly expensive. While each family may need different support depending on their specific situations, here are some ways you can support people on the spectrum with your time or money:

### VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

There are schools and organizations all across the valley that can always use extra hands.

Find some here:

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/resource-guide/state/AZ>

### DONATE YOUR AZ TAXES

In the state of AZ, you can donate your state tax liability (up to certain limits) to a private school of your choosing. There are schools in the valley that cater specifically to developmentally disabled students and they heavily rely on donations of this type to stay open. Here's one organization that facilitates this type of donation:

<https://www.topsforkids.com>

### DONATE THROUGH AMAZON SMILE

Did you know that you can sign up to donate 0.5% of your Amazon purchase amount to charity? Shop through smile.amazon and your designated charity will receive the donation on Amazon-sold items:

<http://smile.amazon.com/about>

### OTHER INFORMATION

If you or someone you know is dealing with a child who may be developmentally delayed, please seek out help as early intervention is critical with people on the spectrum<sup>7</sup>.

Resources are also available for older children and adults as well.

### RESOURCES IN ARIZONA:

#### Arizona Early Intervention Program

Phone: 602-532-9960 or 888-439-5609 | Web: <http://azdes.gov/AzEIP/>

#### Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services

Web: [www.azed.gov/special-education](http://www.azed.gov/special-education)

#### Arizona Autism Coalition

Phone: 480-268-1453 | Web: <http://azautism.org>

#### Autism Society of Greater Phoenix

Phone: 480-940-1093 | Web: [www.phxautism.org](http://www.phxautism.org)

*This handout was created by an Arizona autism mom who was looking to provide some helpful information to those who have asked for it.*

*This is a collection of data along her own personal perspective; other people may have different opinions or views about the latter.*

<sup>1</sup> Center for Disease Control, *Tracking Autism Spectrum Disorder and Other Developmental Disabilities in Arizona* [<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/states/addm-arizona-fact-sheet.pdf>]

<sup>2</sup> Autism Speaks, *About Autism* [[https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/sctk\\_about\\_autism.pdf](https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/sctk_about_autism.pdf)]

<sup>3</sup> Giarelli, E., Wiggins, L.D., Rice, C.E., Levy, S.E., Kirby, R.S., Pinto-Martin, J., & Mandell, D. (2010). Sex differences in the evaluation and diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders among children. *Disability and Health Journal*, 3 (2), 107-116. Robinson, EB, Lichtenstein, P, Anckarsäter, H, Happé, F, & Ronald, A. (2013). Examining and interpreting the female protective effect against autistic behavior. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 110(13), 5258-62. Russell, G., Steer, C., & Golding, J. (2011). Social and demographic factors that influence the diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorders. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 46(12), 1283-1293.

<sup>4</sup> Giarelli et al., (2010) [same as above].

<sup>5</sup> Shimabukuro TT et al (2007). Medical expenditures for children with an autism spectrum disorder in a privately insured population. *J Autism Dev Disord*. 2008 Mar; 38(3):546-52. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17690969>]

<sup>6</sup> Amendah, D., Grosse, S.D., Peacock, G., & Mandell, D.S. (2011). The economic costs of autism: A review. In D. Amaral, D. Geschwind, & G. Dawson (Eds.), *Autism spectrum disorders* (pp. 1347-1360).

<sup>7</sup> Zwaigenbaum, L. et al., (2015). Early intervention for children with autism spectrum disorder under 3 years of age: recommendations for practice and research. *Pediatrics*. 2015 Oct (supplement 1).