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To: scott@afamilyforeverychild.org
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Autism

Autism is rapidly becoming one of the most diagnosed developmental disability in the country, coming in at 3rd above Down's. With a rise in the diagnosing of autism, it will become more likely that a foster or adoptive parent is placed with a child who is diagnosed with some form of autism. The following newsletter outlines what the different types of autism there are, and what you as the child's foster or adoptive parent can do to help your child.

The Different Types of Autism

Autism typically appears within the first 3 years of a child's life. While the exact causes are unknown, mental health professionals have been able to place the different types of autism on a "spectrum". Below are the three most common types of autism spectrum diagnoses:

Autistic Disorder- Children diagnosed with autistic disorder typically have language delays, social and communication challenges, and intellectual disabilities.

Aspergers- Children diagnosed with Aspergers may have social and communication challenges, but they typically do not have language or intellectual disabilities.

Pervasive Developmental Disorder- Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)- Also known as "**Atypical Autism**". Children diagnosed with PDD-NOS typically have some, but not all, the criteria of autistic disorder and Aspergers. The most common characteristics of PDD-NOS are social and communication challenges.

Diagnoses

Signs of autism may not show up in children until after 24 months of age. Children may seem to be developing normally, showing signs of communication and sociability, until all of a sudden there is a sharp decline in their communication and social skills. Children may no longer make eye contact with their parent, and may show a preference for playing alone. They may also have a hard time playing "pretend", and may become frustrated when trying to express their feelings and understand the feelings of others. Children may also start repeating words or phrases over and over, or they may have changes in bodily reactions such as banging their head, flapping their hands, or rocking back and forth. If you notice a change in your child's development at any stage, talk to your child's pediatrician. They will be able to give you an idea of where your child should be developmentally, or refer you to a developmental pediatrician or child psychologist for further information and help.

How you can help

Early intervention has been shown to drastically improve outcomes. Children who receive treatment early on in life are able to live alone, hold a job, create and maintain relationships, etc. You can also help your child by becoming informed about the different types of autism and their treatments, and by advocating for your child in school and life. For more information on autism, treatment, diagnoses, resources and more, please visit the [CDC-ASD](#) or the [Center for Autism and Related Disorder \(CARD\)](#) sites.

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