



## **Autism Spectrum Disorder**

### **An MMA physician's guide**

### **If you suspect...**

That a child is at risk for developmental delays and disorders:

**Listen to the parents.** They're with their children round the clock and are well-positioned to report on their child's development. This, combined with routine observation and comparisons with other children, is very powerful.

**Understand** the importance of early identification and intervention. Pediatric clinicians are in a unique position to identify developmental delays early and refer children for further evaluation and treatment.

**Consider the prevalence** of developmental delays. Based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, one in every 166 children (17 percent) has an autism spectrum disorder. That means every pediatric professional can expect to see at least one patient in his or her practice with concerns about such conditions.

**Heighten** your "index of suspicion." Make developmental surveillance a regular part of every office visit.

**Make each well-child visit** an opportunity for screening and surveillance. By doing so, physicians can acknowledge parents' concerns, reduce over- or under-referrals, and validate concerns and observations.

**Create** a screening training and implementation plan. Make sure all staff members are properly trained and that you have plenty of educational materials available for parents.

**Deliver difficult news** with sensitivity and understanding. Positive outcomes of these discussions will set the tone for how parents view their child and how satisfied they are with the physician/patient relationship.

**Narrow the gap** between knowledge and behavior. Use of validated screening tools strengthens a clinician's level of certainty when it comes to making a referral for further evaluation.

**Follow up** with referrals to local agencies, services, and specialists.

Excerpted from "Desperately Seeking Solutions," by Frank Clancy, in the [March 2006 issue](#) of *Minnesota Medicine*.

## Resources for physicians and parents

Many parents report feeling isolated and helpless with the diagnosis of ASD. In fact, few medical conditions enjoy the breadth and depth of support that autism has.

### [Autism Society of Minnesota \(AuSM\)](#)

An organization of families, educators, care givers, and professionals committed to supporting individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). AuSM has members throughout the state of Minnesota and the upper Midwest. AuSM provides education support, collaboration, and advocacy.

(651) 647-1083

### [Minnesota Autism Center](#)

Founded by parents of children with autism, in part, because of the institutional and social discrimination faced by developmentally disabled children. MAC promotes participation with families and peers

and the development and support of healthy families. Serving the Twin Cities, Rochester, St. Cloud and Mankato areas.

### **Minnesota Medicine articles**

The MMA's magazine has published numerous articles about Autism Spectrum Disorder, including "[Sensory Mystery](#)," article by Frank Clancy, in the November 2002 issue.

### **University of Minnesota Pediatric Specialty Clinic**

Provides coordinated specialty care for infants, children, teens and young adults.

### **University of Minnesota Clinical Neuroscience ASD Clinic**

A multidisciplinary clinic staffed by specialists in developmental/behavioral pediatrics, psychology and neuropsychology. It is part of a university-wide effort to foster clinical research and basic science research into the clinical and biological underpinnings of these disorders.

### **University of Minnesota Autism Discussion Group for Providers**

Meets monthly, Mondays at noon at the Center for Neurobehavioral Development (CNBD) at the University of Minnesota, to learn about and explore understanding of autism and discuss possibilities for future research.

### **Alexander Center for Child Development and Behavior**

Park Nicollet's Alexander Center provides diagnostic, treatment, consultation and education services for children and adolescents with disorders relating to attention, behavior, development, learning, and other areas.

### **Fraser Child and Family Center**

Twin Cities-based service organization serving families of children with autism and other disorders since 1935. [Fraser Resource Directory for Families of Children with ASD](#).

### **Behavioral Dimensions**

Hopkins-based clinic conducts an intensive behavioral intervention regimen for children with autism, as well as behavioral consultation for individuals with developmental disabilities.

## **National Resources**

### **National Autism Association**

"The mission of the National Autism Association is to educate and empower families affected by autism and other neurological disorders, while advocating on behalf of those who cannot fight for their own rights."

877-NAA-AUTISM

### **Association for the Help of Retarded Children**

Provides opportunities and choices for children and adults with developmental disabilities to realize their potential and achieve their goals by providing an array of individual and family supports.

### **AutismLink**

Provides information and support for autism spectrum disorder, on a site that links to features, other autism organizations, services to help parents to meet other parents in their area; a radio show, and a nation-wide database of service providers.

### **Autism Speaks**

An advocacy, fundraising and support organization founded in 2005, and dedicated to funding global biomedical research into the causes, prevention, treatments, and cure for autism; to raising public awareness about autism and its effects on individuals, families, and society; and to bringing hope to all who deal with the hardships of this disorder.

### **Autism Society of America**

The parent organization of the Minnesota chapter – a national clearinghouse for information and help.

### **Autism Source**

A searchable online database of information and resources relating to ASD.

### **Center for Autism and Related Disorders, Inc. (CARD)**

Among the world's largest and most experienced organizations treating children with autism and related disorders. Following the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), CARD develops individualized treatment plans, providing services to families throughout the world.

### **The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation**

Provides grants to residential, recreational vocational and educational programs that enrich the lives of adolescents and adults with ASD. Programs that involve family support relating to adolescents and adults with ASD are also part of our grant giving endeavors.

### **The Dan Marino Foundation**

Founded by Miami Dolphins quarterback Dan Marino and his wife Claire. It supports programs that provide integrated intervention services for children with autism and other special needs.

### **The Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism**

Established by NFL quarterback Doug Flutie and his wife, Laurie, in honor of their son who was diagnosed with autism at age three. Goals are to support financially disadvantaged families who need assistance in caring for their children with autism, as well as to fund education and research into the causes and consequences of childhood autism.'

### **FAAAS (Families of Adults Affected by Asperger's Syndrome)**

Offers support to the family members of adult individuals affected with Asperger's Syndrome. Their goal is to educate the public to the existence of Asperger's Syndrome in the adult population and to bring awareness of this neurological disorder and its ramifications on the "whole" family to the medical communities who are directly or indirectly involved.

### **First Signs, Inc.**

National nonprofit dedicated to early identification and intervention of children with autism and other developmental disorders.

### **The Friendship Circle**

Seeks to help families of children with special needs by fostering a relationship between community teenagers and those children.

### **The Help Group**

Founded in 1975, it is the largest and most comprehensive nonprofit organization in the United States serving children with special needs related to autism, Asperger's Disorder, learning disabilities, ADHD, mental retardation, abuse and emotional problems. The Help Group's six specialized day schools offer pre-K through high school programs for more than 1,100 students. The Help Group serves students 500

students with Autism Spectrum Disorders on a daily basis and offers diagnostic assessments, intervention, family support, after-school social skills programs and summer day camps.

### **Ready 2 Learn**

A nonprofit dedicated to providing parents and teachers with high quality, engaging, and effective educational materials.

### **Unlocking Autism**

Works to increase public awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorders. UA assists parents of newly diagnosed children through its national parent-to-parent network and national hotline center. UA helps educate parents and families on treatment options, advocacy, and how to affect change nationally and as in their home communities.



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"Physicians Working for a Healthy Minnesota"