

## What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex life-long developmental disorder defined by diagnostic criteria that include deficits in social communication and social interaction, and the presence of restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities that can persist throughout a person's life. It affects individuals differently and to varying degrees. ASD typically appears during early childhood (first three years of a person's life) and affects a person's daily functioning. It is the result of a neurological disorder that affects functioning of the brain.

ASD is four times more common in males than in females. It does not discriminate, affects persons of all races, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds throughout the world. Family income, lifestyle and education do not affect the chance of this disorder occurrence. Minority children tend to be diagnosed later and less often than Caucasian children. There is no medical detection for autism spectrum disorders.

Signs and symptoms of ASD might include having difficulty with back and forth conversations, making little or inconsistent eye contact, expressive and receptive communication skills, lack of interest in peer relationships, understanding personal space boundaries, limited spontaneous or make-believe play. Persons may have an intense interest in certain topics, such as numbers, details or facts. They may resist changes in routine, display stereotyped behaviors such as hand flapping, head rolling, body rocking, spinning in circles, etc. Individuals may have restricted interests that have an abnormal intense or focused interest, unusual sensory interest such as staring at objects, avoidance of particular foods, textures and everyday sounds.

Some persons with ASD have comorbid health problems. They also may have an additional diagnosis such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Intellectual Disability (ID), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), etc.

## Facts About Autism Spectrum Disorders



affects individuals in every country and region of the world



unknown single cause and currently no cure



third most common developmental disorder in the world



impaired social communication/ interaction, cognitive and play skills



spectrum severity can range from mild to severe



more common in males births (1 in 54) than females (1 in 189)

- Prevalence has drastically risen to 1 in every 59 births in the United States.
- ASD is definitely treatable, but individuals do not "out grow" this disorder.
- Early diagnosis, consistent intervention, and teaching can lead to significantly improved outcomes in reference to behaviors, expressive and receptive communication, cognitive and social skills.
- The combination of genetics and environmental factors appear to play a major role in the causes of this disorder.
- Each person with ASD is unique with his or her own challenges, likes, personality, preferences and strengths.
- ASD cost an estimated \$60,000 a year for a person, with the majority of funding designated for specialized services and lost wages related to increased demands on one or both parents.
- Medical expenses are far greater than those without this disorder.
- ASD is the fastest-growing developmental disorder in the United States, yet the most under funded, and continues to be an important public health crisis that demands extensive support.
- Over 72,000 persons in South Carolina are thought to have ASD with many individuals still undiagnosed.
- More persons will be evaluated with ASD this year than with childhood cancer, juvenile diabetes and pediatric AIDS combined.

# Mission Statement of the South Carolina Autism Society

The mission of the South Carolina Autism Society is to equip those affected by autism spectrum disorders with knowledge and supports to maximize their quality of life.

## South Carolina Autism Society Statewide Services/Programs

Our organization offers the following services listed below:

### Information and Resources:

This service is provided to families and professionals about ASD, available services and providers in South Carolina.

### Case Management:

This service helps SCDDSN qualified individuals and families identify and obtain services. Services are consumer driven and based on the appropriateness and availability of the service. People with ASD are unique with their own needs, wants, desires, goals and dreams. Through our case management efforts, SCAS ensures the persons we serve always has a choice and voice.

### Parent-School Partnership:

The Parent-School Partnership Program (PSP) is designed to assist families that have school -aged children with ASD to reach their academic and functional potential in the public educational system. The program strives to build collaboration between parents and school personnel recognizing that both are essential partners in a child's education. Parent Mentors are available throughout the state to assist school personnel and parents with building strong positive relationships through the Individual Education Plan and 504 processes.

### Trainings and Workshops:

SCAS holds local and regional trainings/workshops regarding specific topics or best practices for persons with autism. We strive to present information on research-based practices for families, professionals and others involved with a person affected by ASD. Our organization is currently assessing other possible trainings in reference to understanding and addressing the needs of persons impacted by ASD.

### First Responder Training:

This is an awareness and training service that is designed to provide essential information, to prevent the occurrence of a serious injury, trauma or an inappropriate arrest which may result from an encounter between persons with ASD and community emergency personnel during critical or sensitive situations. The goal of this training service is to create an atmosphere of understanding among public safety personnel with the hope that unfortunate situations can be avoided.

## How You Can Help Touch Lives ?

The state of South Carolina has made a lot of progress regarding obtaining knowledge about ASD, appropriate education, treatment options and best practices that can help address the needs of persons affected by ASD. However, there is still much work to be done to improve a person's quality of life. For instance, you can make a difference in a person's life by volunteering your time. In addition, you can also make a positive impact by providing resources to the South Carolina Autism Society (SCAS). Finally, to help address some of our non-funded initiatives, financial contributions are highly welcomed. For instance, your donation might cover the costs of feeding families, helping with financial assistance during seen and unforeseen situations, and summer camp sponsorships especially during the grueling summer months.

SCAS' staff will be more than happy to assist you. Therefore, please contact our office if you know someone that would benefit from our services. SCAS' contact information is listed below.

**South Carolina Autism Society**  
806 12th Street  
West Columbia, SC 29169

**Phone Numbers:** (803) 750-6988 and (800) 438-4790  
**Fax :** (803) 750-8121  
**Email Address:** [scas@scautism.org](mailto:scas@scautism.org)  
**Website :** [www.scautism.org](http://www.scautism.org)