

## **Definitions:**

Autism is a pervasive developmental disorder that has both an educational definition, based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and a clinical or medical definition, taken from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV-Text Revised (DSM-IV-TR).

Core characteristics of autism include the presence of markedly abnormal or impaired development in social interaction and communication and a markedly restricted repertoire of activities and interests.

### **Educational Definition (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA 2004)**

Autism is a developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction. It is generally evident before age 3 and adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism include engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.

Autism does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance.

A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age 3 may be identified as having autism.

### **Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV-Text Revised**

#### **Asperger Syndrome**

The main characteristic of Asperger Syndrome is impairment of social interaction. Also included in this definition is the repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities.

#### **Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)**

This category should be used when there is a severe and pervasive impairment in the development of reciprocal social interaction or verbal and nonverbal communication skills, or when stereotyped behavior, interests, and activities are present, but the criteria are not met for a specific pervasive developmental disorder such as autism, Asperger Syndrome, schizophrenia, schizotypal personality disorder, or avoidant personality disorder.

#### **Autism**

This definition should be used when qualitative impairments in social interaction and communication are present as well as stereotyped behavior, interests, and activities are present. Individuals who receive this diagnosis experience greater impairments than those who receive the diagnosis of PDD-NOS.