



CALIFORNIA AREA INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE
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Autism Spectrum: Core Characteristics and Resources for Families

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Dr. Linda Lotspeich is a clinical professor, emerita in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University. Prior to retirement Dr. Lotspeich practiced child psychiatry in the Autism and Developmental Disorders Clinic at Stanford Children's Health. Her background includes being a special education teacher for four years in the 1970s. Since 2015 she has been teaching mindfulness meditation skills to parents of children with behavior challenges and/or learning differences including autism.



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Learning Objectives

At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Identify three core characteristics of autism spectrum
- Provide families with resources to support their children with autism



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Three Core Characteristics of Autism Spectrum

#1 Social Challenges

- Difficulty understanding what others are thinking and feeling
- Difficulty interacting to others
- Difficulty making and keeping friends

#2 Communication Challenges

- Those with an intellectual disability have difficulties talking
- Others struggle with reciprocal conversations, so conversations tend to be one-sided
- Difficulties with nonverbal communication according to the person's culture (eye contact, facial expressions & use of gestures)



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Three Core Characteristics of Autism Spectrum

#3 Restricted Repetitive patterns of Behavior, Interests & Activities (Some of these characteristics can be assets)

- Repetitive movements and/or speech
- Good with visual details & memory for details
- Difficulty adjusting to change
- Strong/fixated interests
- Sensory sensitivities



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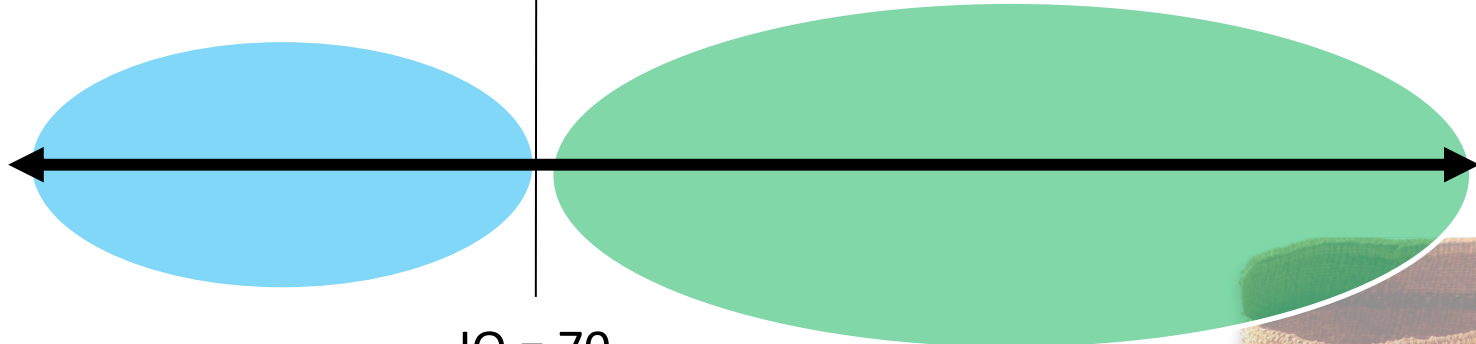
Autism Spectrum

Intellectual Disability

Substantial support
throughout life

Range learning disabilities to giftedness

Moderate to no supports throughout life



IQ = 70

Scale of IQ/Adaptive Skills

Neurodiversity Movement



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Public Resources: Early Intervention & Special Education Services

Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA)

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

Part C: Early Intervention

- Called Early Start in CA and overseen by CA Regional Centers
- Eligible: children 2 years & younger with a developmental delay

Part B: Special Education Services

- IEP (Individual Education Plan)
- Ages: 3 – 18yo and for some up until 22yo
- Eligible: 13 eligibility categories, autism being one of the 13
- Example Services: classroom aide, speech & language therapy, occupational therapy, social skills therapy, special education classroom

504 Plan – Accommodations

Americans with Disability Act (ADA)

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>

- Public Schools (504 Plan) & Colleges
- Eligible: disability must impact ability to receive an education
- Example Accommodations: extra time for assignments & tests, preferred seating, & decrease homework



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Public Resources: California Regional Centers

CA Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

<https://www.dds.ca.gov>

- DDS oversees the coordination/delivery of services provided by a network of 21 non-profit Regional Centers (RC)
- Eligibility: A few developmental conditions, including autism PLUS having a substantial disability that interferes with daily functioning
So not all individuals with autism are eligible.
- Ages: 3 years throughout life
- Services include:
 - Respite care
 - Medi-Cal coverage
 - Community Services like camps & non-medical therapies
 - Adult services include:
 - Social Security
 - Residential Support
 - Employment Support/Day Programs
- **New RC Program: Self Determination**
<https://www.dds.ca.gov/initiatives/sdp/>



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Resources: Behavioral Therapy

CA medical insurances including MediCal are mandated to cover behavioral therapy for children diagnosed with autism spectrum.

Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)

ABA teaches skills (e.g., language, and social skills) AND reduces maladaptive and dangerous behaviors.

California Behavioral Health Treatment Senate Bill 946 (2012)

- Eligibility: Medical Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum and a healthcare provider makes a referral for ABA.
- Ages: 21 years and younger
- Therapy is typically provided in the home, multiple hours a week and includes parent training.

<https://www.insurance.ca.gov/01-consumers/110-health/60-resources/05-autism/>



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Resources:

List of Community Services

Mental Health Services

Psychiatric medications and psychotherapy

Occupational Therapy

Speech and Language Therapy

Social Skills Training Groups

Equine Therapy/Support Dogs

Tutoring and organizing/planning therapy



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Autism Organizations: Provide Resources including Family Support

Autism Society
Local Community Chapters
<https://autismsociety.org>

Autism Speaks
Provides info and lists of local resources
<https://www.autismspeaks.org>

Mental Health & Autism Insurance Project
Assists families to receive treatments in California
<https://mhautism.org>



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