



# An Introduction to Autism

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Thursday, October 19 | 2:00 p.m. ET

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CUPA-HR Webinar

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# Presenter



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# Agenda

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- Identify Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Possible Manifestations/Features
- Communication Challenges
- Interventions/Services
- Communication Tips
- Resources



# Objectives

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- Improve interactions with individuals on the autism spectrum
- Identify services sought through employee benefits



# Poll Question

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How much do you feel you know about  
Autism Spectrum Disorder?

- Almost everything
- A little
- Nothing

# What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?



# Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Autism

Asperger's Syndrome

PDD-NOS

CDD

Inconsistency

Splitting diagnoses was difficult



# Definition

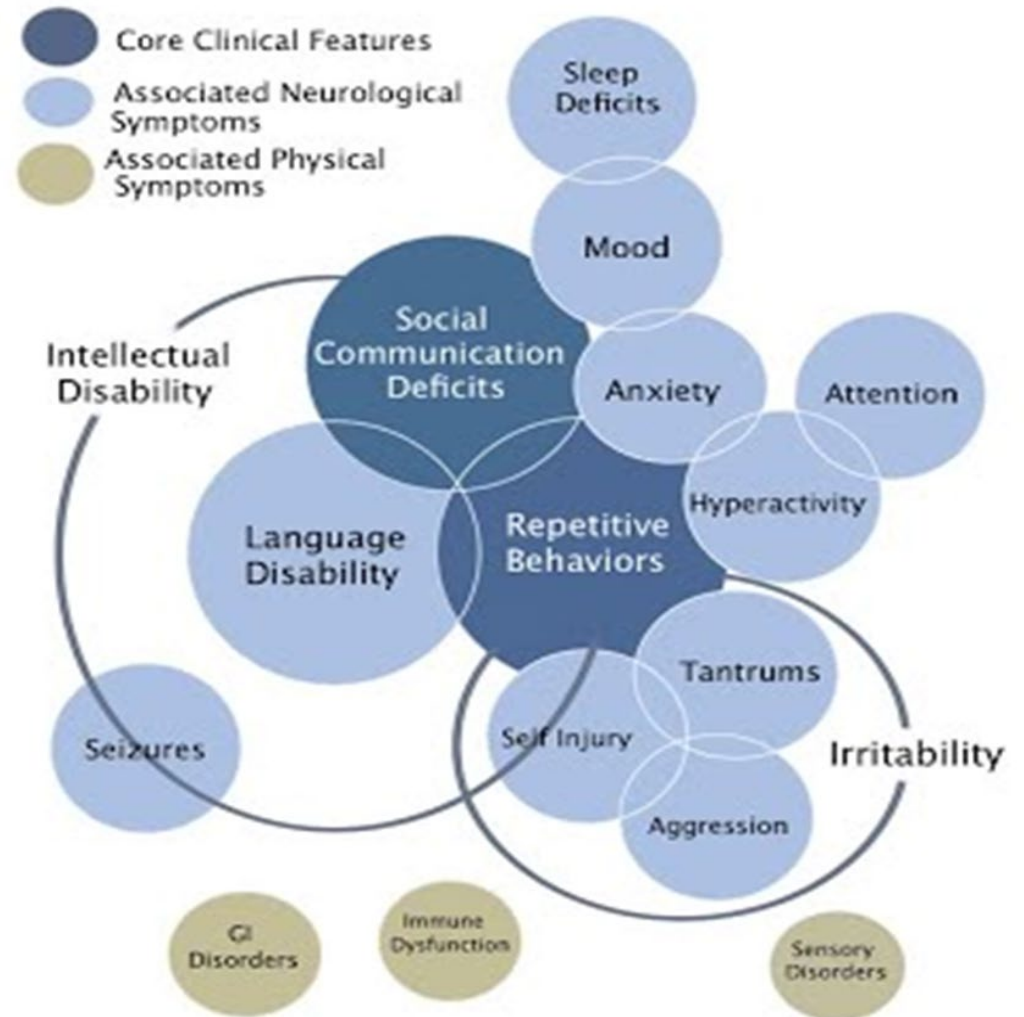
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A complex neurodevelopmental disability that impairs a person's abilities to process input, communicate, and interact

- “Neurodevelopmental disability” = based in the brain and the way the brain works
- Appears to be based on combination of genes and environment
- Can be co-occurring with other conditions; critical to seek professional diagnosis

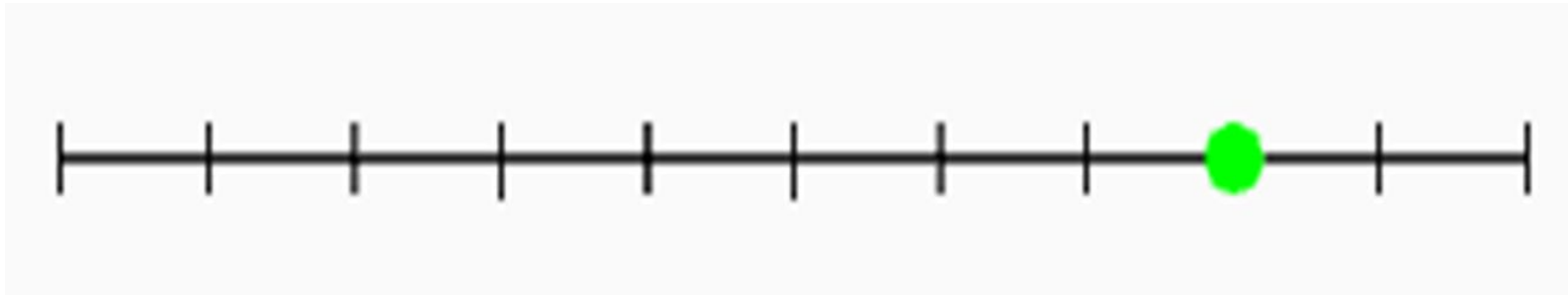


# Manifestations/ Overarching Features



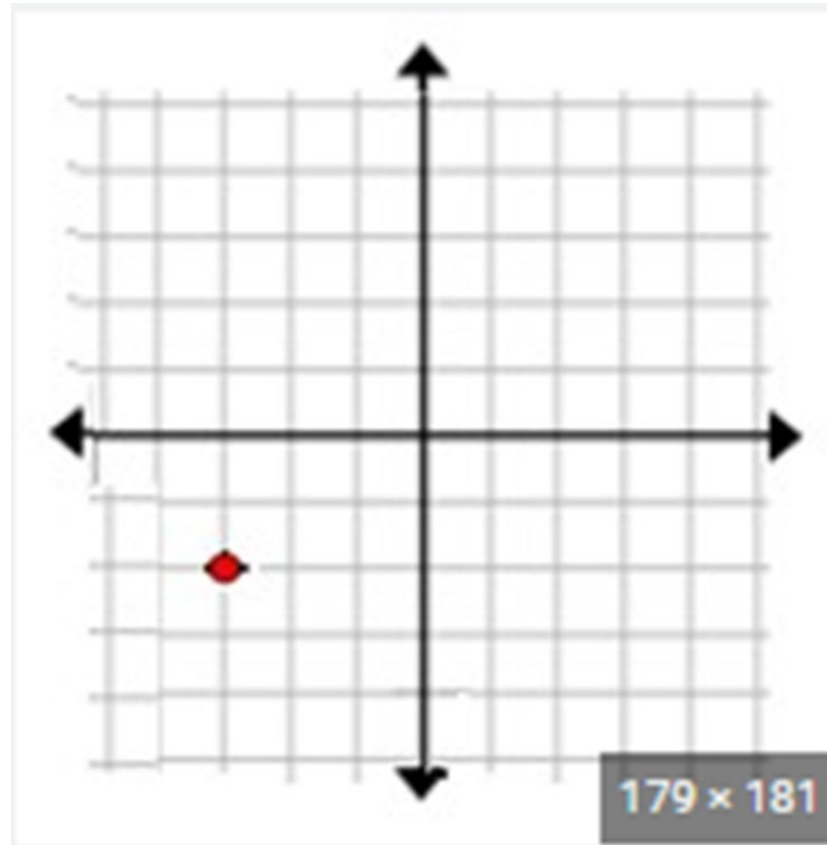
# Autism Spectrum?

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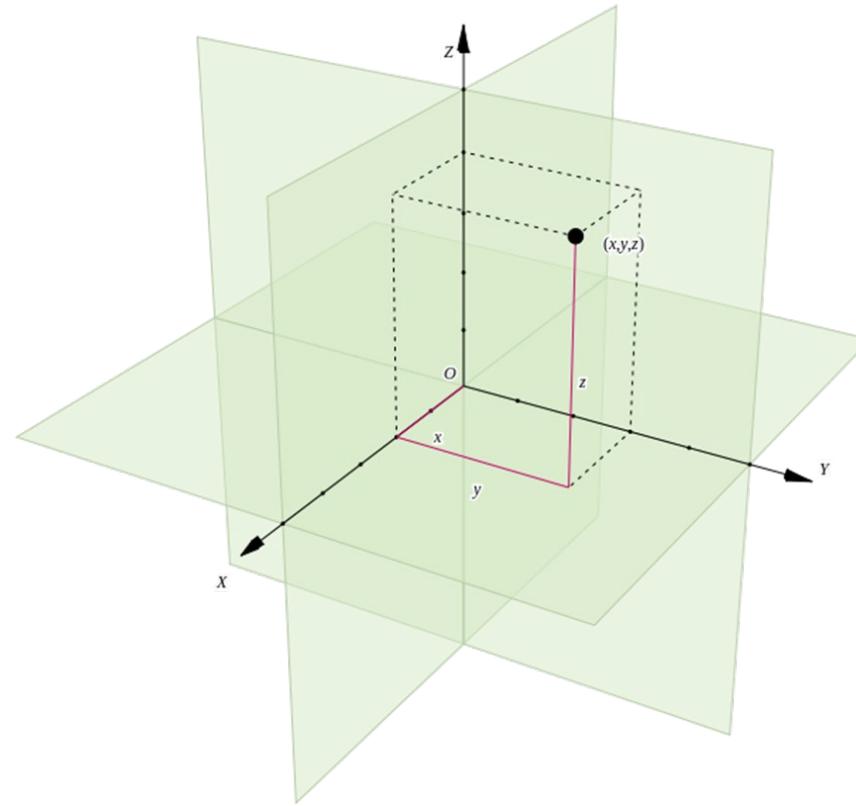
# Autism Spectrum?

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# Autism Spectrum?

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# Autism Spectrum

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# Neurodiversity

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“The idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one ‘right’ way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits”

- ASD, ADHD, ABI, NVLD, OCD
- 7 Principles of Universal Design

# Demographics

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- No association with race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status
- 4x more common in males
- Prevalence
  - i. 2007 (\*2000): 1 in 150
  - ii. 2009 (\*2006): 1 in 110
  - iii. 2012 (\*2008): 1 in 88
  - iv. 2016 (\*2014): 1 in 68
  - v. 2023 (\*2020): 1 in 36

# Differences in the Brain

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- Neural connections built at/after birth  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNNsN9IJKws>
- Pruning
- Experiences not translated into skills
- Stress response system
- Example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPknwW8mPAM&t=6s>



Three Core Concepts in Early Development

# 1 Experiences Build Brain Architecture

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD

Center on the Developing Child  HARVARD UNIVERSITY

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNNsN9lJkws&t=75s&ab\\_channel=CenterontheDevelopingChildatHarvardUniversity](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNNsN9lJkws&t=75s&ab_channel=CenterontheDevelopingChildatHarvardUniversity)

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# Accommodation Examples

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## Sensory

- fire drill notice
- alternative lighting
- noise cancelling headset
- desk pedaling unit

## Personal digital assistant

## Task separation

## Job coaching

# Duration

- Children may:
  - Have delayed development from birth,
  - Develop typically until sudden loss of skills [age 2-3], or
  - Seem on track until enough language/social skills would be present but instead atypical communication/preoccupations can be observed
- Does not end with childhood



## lifetime social cost

Social costs associated with autism for 1990–2019 are estimated at \$7 trillion dollars. If the rate of increase in prevalence continues, costs to society could reach nearly \$15 trillion by 2029. These estimates only reflect what society pays, not the additional expenses families incur out of their own pockets.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT COST](#)

<https://tacanow.org/about-autism/>

# Experiences

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Non-speaking: 40%

Elopement: 49%

Anxiety: 40%

Seizures: 38%

Sleep disorders: 53%

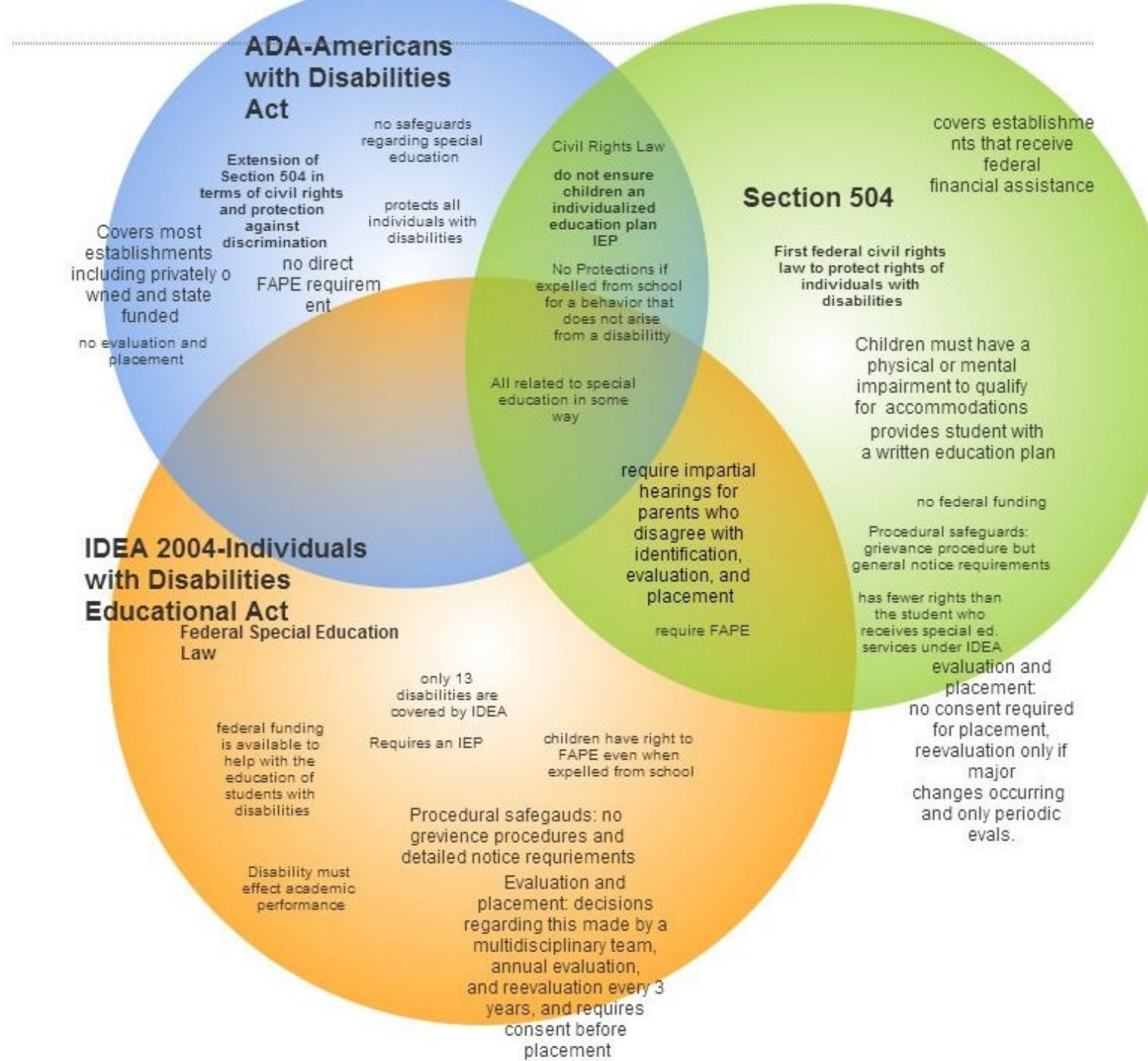
Above-avg. IQ: \*40%

Gastrointestinal problems: 4x more

Unmet medical needs: 4x more

Co-occurring medical conditions: 95% (avg. of 4.9 each)

# Intersection of Laws



# Dependence

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## Adults with ASD:

**49% live with parent/relative**

**27% live in group homes**

**8% live in institutions**

**5% living situations are  
unknown**

**10% live independently**



**14%**

**of adults with autism  
have paid jobs in  
community-based  
settings**

LEARN MORE ABOUT EMPLOYMENT IN AUTISM

<https://tacanow.org/about-autism/>





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**Middle-aged adults with ASD:  
2.6x more likely to have a  
diagnosis of Alzheimer's/  
other dementias**



**age 72**

is the average life expectancy  
of an individual without autism



**age 36**

is the average life expectancy  
of an individual with autism

**40x**

more likely to die from  
preventable injuries

LEARN MORE ABOUT INJURY MORTALITY IN AUTISM



# Risk

<https://tacanow.org/about-autism/>

- No cure
- Continuing stress on caregivers

"People who are 'high functioning' or 'don't look or act autistic' are still having a hard time. A lot of us do this thing called 'masking,' where we basically act as if we are neurotypical based on the stuff we learn from others. It is very exhausting to keep up that fake persona." —[u/jakobebeef98](#)



"Autists are the ultimate square pegs, and the problem with pounding a square peg into a round hole is not that the hammering is hard work. It's that you're destroying the peg."

~ Paul Collins

# Accessing Services

Health/Nursing Care

Speech and Language Therapy

Behavioral Health

Mental Health

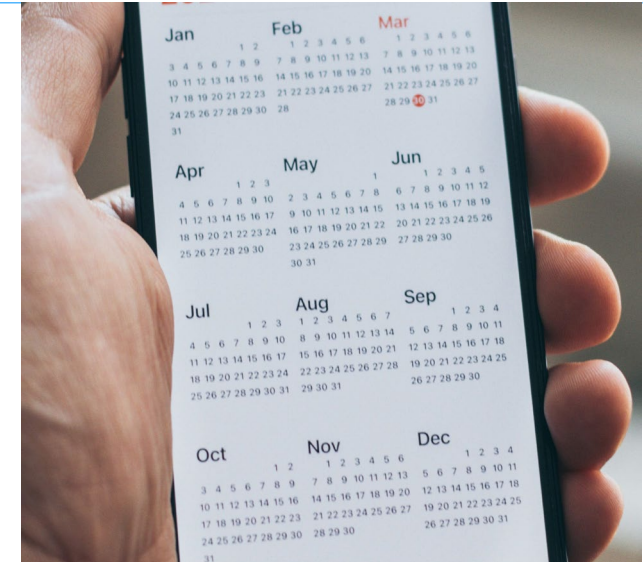
Occupational Therapy

Physical Therapy

Additional Therapies (Developmental, Equine, Music, etc.)

Special Education

Mentoring



# Accessing Services

Education Advocacy

Financial Assistance

Employment Preparation

Service Animals

Adaptive Toys/Bikes/Learning Tools

Durable Medical Equipment/Adaptive Clothes

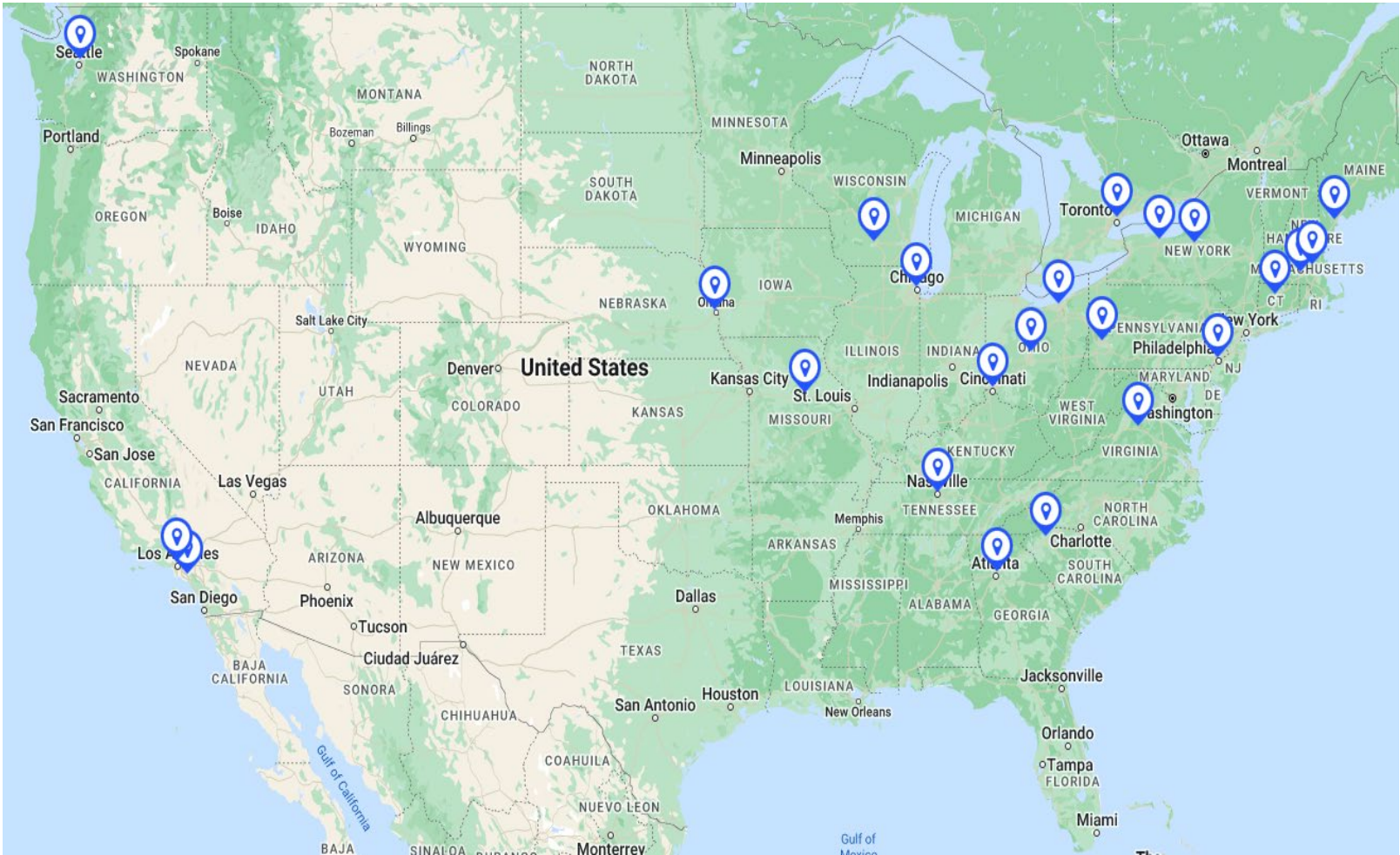
Consumable Medical Supplies

Respite Care

Legal/Financial Planning



\*Check with local advocacy groups about emergency/police ID programs and unique offerings



# Services

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ACNet sites

Tele-mentoring  
available

15 countries

# Communication Tips

Reduce sensory input - but make fidgets available.

Be direct and use literal language.

Tell them it is okay to stim.

Allow for the use of coping skills like counting, deep breathing, or recitations.

Don't wait for/require eye contact.

Offer breaks.

Meet their preference/ability for means of communicating.

Check for understanding.

Don't judge. Be patient and mindful of their right to maintain dignity. Remind others not to stare, whisper, or tolerate bullying. But later explain what you know instead of keeping the topic in the shadows.



# HR Tips

Engage, listen, and model inclusivity

Focus on strengths

Consider whether forms and processes can change

“always done this way” → why?

Interviews:

- Small talk
- Eye contact
- Concepts vs Concrete

Event Neuroinclusivity:

- info about venue, etc.
- closed captioning
- quiet areas for breaks and lunch
- standing space for people who need to move

# Takeaways: Autism is...

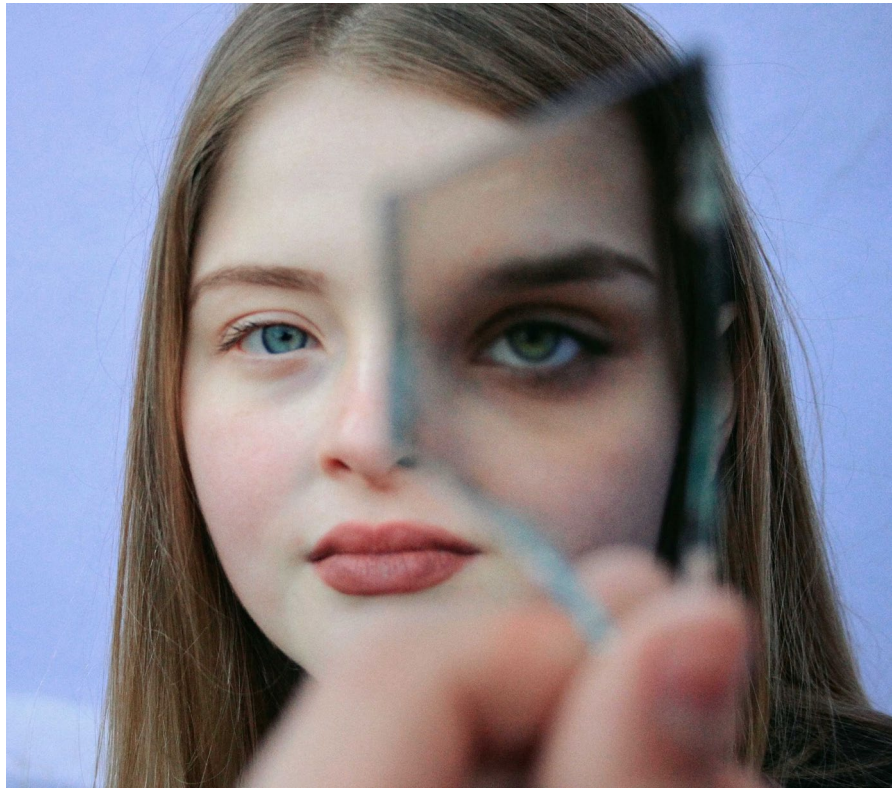
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- Not Visible
- Everywhere
- Variable
- Not “Curable”
- Manageable With Resources
- NOT Misbehavior

AUTISM  
M2I2W

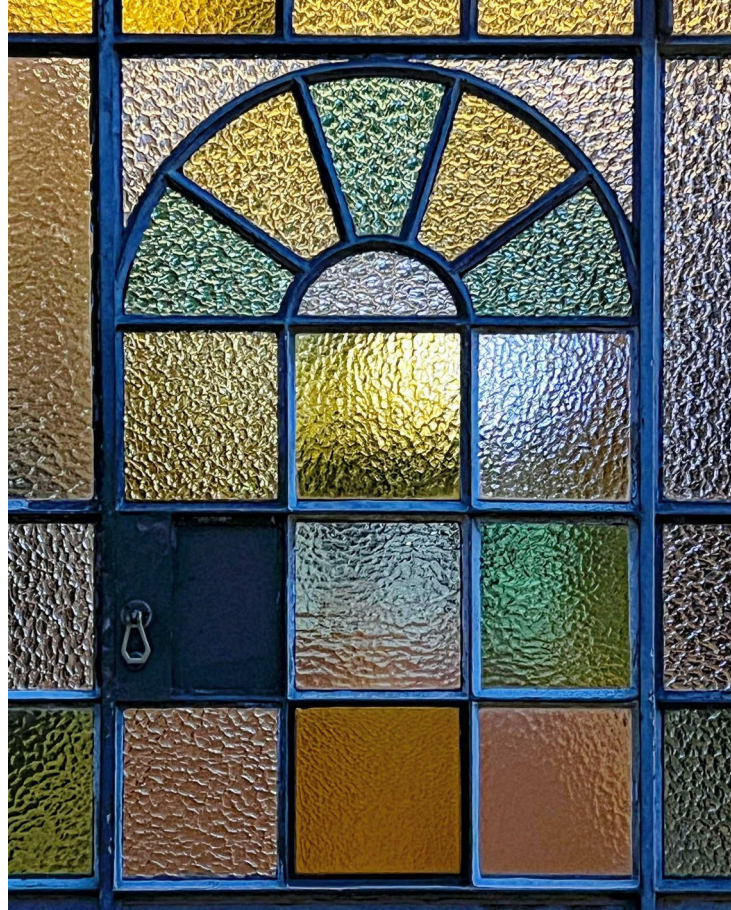
# Together

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# Together

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Together



# Have a Question?



Submit questions to our presenters  
using the Chat.



# Thank You

*Please complete your event evaluation*

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