

# Autism Evaluations

**autism**, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of profiles characterized by challenges with social skills, verbal and nonverbal communication, and repetitive behaviors, restricted interests and/or sensory differences. Because autism is a spectrum disorder, each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges.

While either “person with autism” or “autistic person”\* is acceptable, several studies suggest that identity-first language\* has become the preference of autistic people.



stats

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facts

- 1 in 36 children in the U.S. is diagnosed (ASD; CDC, 2023)
- Boys are 4 times more likely to be diagnosed than girls.
- Although autism can sometimes be detected at 18 months of age, most are diagnosed after age 4, and sometimes as late as adulthood.
- 31% of children with ASD have an intellectual disability, 25% are in the borderline range, and 44% have IQ scores in the average to above average ranges.
- Autism affects all ethnic and socioeconomic groups.
- Minority groups tend to be diagnosed later and less often.
- Early identification and interventions are very important.
- There are no medical tests for detection of autism.

## Barriers to evaluations

- finding an autism specialist
- being seen in a timely manner
- cost
- time and distance



## Some associated + co-occurring conditions:

Some evaluators only diagnose yes-or-no autism. However, autism occurring alone is the exception rather than the rule.

ASD may co-occur with or is associated with ADHD, anxiety, eating disorders, executive dysfunction, mood disorders, alexithymia, OCD, specific learning differences, intellectual delay or giftedness, language impairment, sensory integration, delays in independent living skills, and other conditions.

Therefore, it is important to assess the full picture with a comprehensive evaluation, especially for treatment planning.



# Autism Evaluations

The gold standard for evaluating for autism is an assessment by an ASD specialist such as a psychologist, psychiatrist or developmental pediatrician who makes an evaluation based on the DSM-5-TR criteria.

## What an evaluation report is like:

Evaluation reports include a diagnosis and treatment planning. Comprehensive reports, which assess many areas, may also include tests of and further treatment planning related to: cognition / IQ, independent living / adaptive, social, communication, behavioral, emotional, psychological, sensory, motor, speech, language and sometimes personality.

## Places to receive evaluations (differs depending on age and level of comprehensiveness):

- ☐ Early Childhood Intervention
- ☐ School district\*
- ☐ ABA clinics
- ☐ Major hospitals
- ☐ County clinics
- ☐ Private practices

\* determines educational eligibility vs. medical diagnosis  
Contact your insurance for a list of in-network providers

## When to seek 2nd opinion: There are many reasons to seek a 2nd opinion; some may include when the evaluator:

- ☐ is not an autism specialist or a comprehensive assessment was not completed but warranted
- ☐ dismisses autism due to good eye contact
- ☐ denies that autism affects a specific group, like girls and women
- ☐ eliminates the possibility of autism based on achievement (i.e., doing well in school)

How

**SPECTRA**  
THERAPIES + EVALUATIONS

+

  
**ILLUMINATION**  
PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING

can help:

- ☐ Our team of autism evaluators are psychologists highly specialized in neurodiversities, neurodevelopmental disorders and/or school psychology, neuropsychology, and psychoeducational assessments.
- ☐ We are one of the only clinics in DFW to specialize in assessing all ages, from 20 months to late adulthood, and specialize in understanding autistic females.

- ☐ We prioritize toddler evaluations and attempt to schedule families within one - two months.
- ☐ Our evaluations are comprehensive.
- ☐ We work closely with local schools, universities, transition programs, and state programs, such as Texas Workforce Commission.

Our full SPECTRA team also provides individual therapy, neurodivergent couple's therapy, and family therapy as well as numerous social skills groups and social activities, free lecture series, and services for ages 4 through late adulthood. Please see our website for our free RESOURCE page.



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