

# **AUTISM**

## **1. Definition**

Autism means a developmental disability, which significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three (3) that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experience. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an Emotional Disturbance, as defined in this section.

The term of Autism also includes students who have been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder such as Autism, Pervasive Developmental Disorder—Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS) or Asperger's Syndrome when the child's educational performance is adversely affected. Additionally, it may also include a diagnosis of a Pervasive Developmental Disorder such as Rett's or Childhood Disintegrative Disorder. Autism may exist concurrently with other areas of disability.

After age three (3), a child could be diagnosed as having Autism if the child manifests the above characteristics. Children with Autism demonstrate the following characteristics prior to age 3:

- (1) difficulty relating to others or interacting in a socially appropriate manner;
- (2) absence, disorder, or delay in verbal and/or nonverbal communication; and
- (3) one or more of the following:
  - (a) insistence on sameness as evidenced by restricted play patterns, repetitive body movements, persistent or unusual preoccupations, and/or resistance to change;
  - (b) unusual or inconsistent responses to sensory stimuli.

## **2. Evaluation**

The characteristics identified in the Autism Definition are present.

### Evaluation Procedures

Evaluation of Autism shall include the following:

- (1) parental interviews including developmental history;
- (2) behavioral observations in two or more settings (can be two settings within the school);
- (3) physical and neurological information from a licensed physician, pediatrician or neurologist who can provide general health history to evaluate the possibility of other impacting health conditions;
- (4) evaluation of speech/language/communication skills, cognitive/developmental skills, adaptive behavior skills and social skills; and

- (5) documentation, including observation and/or assessment, of how Autism Spectrum Disorder adversely impacts the child's educational performance in his/her learning environment.

#### Evaluation Participants

Information shall be gathered from the following persons in the evaluation of Autism Spectrum Disorders:

- (1) the parent;
- (2) the child's general education classroom teacher (with a child of less than school age, an individual qualified to teach a child of his/her age);
- (3) a licensed special education teacher;
- (4) a licensed school psychologist, licensed psychologist, licensed psychological examiner (under the direct supervision of a licensed psychologist), licensed senior psychological examiner, or licensed psychiatrist;
- (5) a licensed physician, neurologist, pediatrician or primary health care provider; and
- (6) a certified speech/language teacher or specialist; and
- (7) other professional personnel as needed, such as an occupational therapist, physical therapist or guidance counselor.