

FAQ : Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) and Public Supports

What are ASDs?

According to The National Institute of Mental Health (2009), autism spectrum disorders are pervasive neuro-developmental disorders that usually begin to show symptoms before the age of 3. Children with an autism spectrum disorder show deficits in three major areas of functioning:

- Social interaction, Language and communication, behavior regulation and repetition of stereotypic behavior, and these deficits may persist over the course of an individual's lifetime.

Per the DSM-IV, Autism is an Axis I mental health diagnosis. Other mental health disorders in Axis I include other mental health disorders such as depression, bipolar, schizophrenia, OCD, anxiety, and multi-personality disorders.

How prevalent are ASDs?

According to The National Institute of Mental Health (2009), ASDs are more common in the pediatric population than Down Syndrome, Spina Bifida and Diabetes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2006) an average of 1 in 110 children have an ASD, with four times as many boys as girls being diagnosed with an ASD.

What is the lifetime cost of caring for a person with an ASD based on outcomes?

According to a cost benefit analysis done by Jacobson, Mulick and Green (1996) that has been adjusted for inflation, the lifetime cost or contribution for individuals for ages 3-55 years are as follows :

- A non-Disabled Individual will **earn** an average of **\$1,597,049** in his/her lifetime.
- An individual with autism who gains maximum benefit from early, intensive intervention services will **earn** an average of **\$1,475,791** in his/her lifetime.
- An individual with autism who gains partial benefit from early, intensive intervention services **costs** the public support systems an average of **\$3,368,469** in his/her lifetime.
- An individual with autism who gains minimal benefit from early, intensive intervention or has no access to early, intensive intervention services **costs** the public support system **\$4,404,482** in his/her lifetime.

What are the characteristics of an effective early, intensive intervention program?

According to Lovaas (1987), the most effective early, intensive intervention program consists of 40 hours of 1 on 1 behavioral intervention per week for 2 or more years, depending on the needs of the individual and his/her learning acquisition rate.

Applied Behavior Analysis is endorsed by several prominent entities, including the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Research Council and the U.S. Surgeon General due to its efficacy in treatment. According to Autism Speaks (2009), Applied Behavior Analysis is the early, intensive treatment of choice for autism.

How many individuals make significant gains with early, intensive intervention?

According to Jacobson, Mulick and Green (1996), it can be assumed that between 20 and 50 percent of individuals who receive early, intensive intervention will achieve normal functioning. About another 40 percent of individuals who receive early, intensive intervention will achieve substantial enough gains that they will show a reduced dependency on special services. About 10 percent of individuals who receive early, intensive intervention will continue to require intensive services throughout their lifetime.

What is the outlook for people with autism in adulthood?

The outlook for people with autism is not very encouraging when it comes to obtaining and keeping meaningful employment and for community living:

- **According to the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (2008), only between 6 and 14 percent of adults with autism are competitively employed.** Six percent of individuals with an autism spectrum disorder are employed full time and only 12 percent of individuals with Asperger's Syndrome (the ASD considered to have the highest "recovery" potential due to it being less debilitating than other ASDs) were employed full time even though these individuals have average to high IQs and often superior work skills and college educations (Barnard, et.al., 2001). Most people with ASDs who are able to find work only work 15-27 hours per week (Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence, 2008).
- **As of April 2010, the labor participation rate for individuals with a disability was 22.2 percent compared to 70.2 percent for individuals without a disability.**(US Department of Labor)
- **There are 600,000 individuals with autism in the US over the age of 21, Less than 1% reside in housing with staff that has received specialized training on autism and 80% live with aging parents or caregivers.** (Autism Reoriented Community House (ARCHway), November 2009)
- **The unemployment rate for adults with autism may be as high as 80%.** This is a much higher percentage than the typical adult unemployment rate which usually ranges from 5-8%. (Autism Society of America)
- *Priced Out in 2008* –illuminates the profoundly disturbing facts surrounding the housing crisis faced by more than 4 million non-elderly adults with disabilities who rely on SSI for all their basic needs would have to pay 112.1 percent of their entire monthly income to rent a modest one-bedroom unit. (Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc. Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, Housing Task Force)

Resources

Autism Speaks. (2009). *Arguments in Support of Private Insurance Coverage of Autism-Related Services*. Retrieved from:

http://www.autismvotes.org/atf/cf/%7B2A179B73-96E2-44C3-8816-1B1C0BE5334B%7D/Arguments_for_private_insurance_%20coverage.pdf

Barnard, J., Harvey, V., Potter, D., and Prior, A. (2001), *The Reality for Adults with Autism Spectrum disorders*, National Autistic Society: London.

Harvard School of Public Health. (2006). *Autism Has High Costs to U.S. Society*. Retrieved from

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/2006-releases/press04252006.html>

Jacobson, J.W., Mulick, J.A., and Green, G. (1998), Cost-benefit estimates for early intensive behavioral Intervention for young children with autism- general model and single state case. *Behavioral Interventions*, 13, 201-226.

Lovaas, O. I. (1987). Behavioral treatment and normal intellectual and educational functioning in autistic children. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 55, 3-9.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2006). *Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)*. Retrieved from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/index.html>

The National Institute of Mental Health. (2009). *Autism Spectrum Disorders (Pervasive Developmental Disorders)*. Retrieved from

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-pervasive-developmental-disorders/index.shtml>

Autism Reoriented Community House (ARCH) (2009) *Video on website* <http://foundationforautismsupportandtraining.org/archway.html>

Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc. Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (2008) *Priced Out*

<http://www.tacinc.org/downloads/Priced%20Out%202008.pdf>

The Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence. (2008). *Transition*. Retrieved from: http://www.ocali.org/view.php?nav_id=5