

Brief Administrator Training for Autism Spectrum Disorders 1 Transcript

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Welcome to a Brief Administrator Training for Autism Spectrum Disorders or ASD. This is the first of several webcasts being planned on the topic of Autism Spectrum Disorders. As you are probably aware, more and more students are being identified with an ASD condition. The national CDC says 1 in 150 people have an ASD condition, others say it occurs 1 in 90 people. Your school system will likely meet 4 times as many boys as girls with this condition, but their needs are similar across the spectrum.

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The objective for the Awareness and Knowledge section of this training is to increase awareness and knowledge of ASD learner characteristics and why this information is important

Understanding the core needs of the population served in the classroom or building can facilitate change and growth in student achievement.

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Let's begin with Building an Understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

There is an educational description of Autism Spectrum Disorders recognized in the State Rules for Special Education. As an overview,

- The condition is a lifelong, developmental disability.
- It typically appears in the early childhood years.
- Students exhibit varying degrees of atypical behavior.
- Atypical behavior significantly interferes with the learning process in a variety of ways.

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Iowa has an Educational description of Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorders.

The learning processes affected in this spectrum span 6 areas:

- Communication (both receptive and expressive)
- Social Participation with objects and people
- Repertoires of activities, interests, and imaginative development
- Developmental rates and sequences
- Sensory Processing of input from the senses
- Cognition differences in thinking

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“Autism” means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before the age of three, which 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 experiences.

A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after the age of three could be identified as having autism or ASD. This term includes all conditions described by the term “autism spectrum disorder,” which adversely affects a child’s educational performance. This includes the medical diagnoses of Asperger’s Disorder and Pervasive Developmental Disorder.

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The landscape of autism has changed over the past years nationally. There are more medical diagnostic referrals of toddlers and 2 year olds..... More referrals of older children without intellectual disabilities....and More referrals of adolescents and adults, often with additional conditions including mental health issues.

Nonetheless in Iowa, a medical diagnosis is not required for appropriate services to be provided to the individual in school settings. Soon Medical diagnostic criteria will change from three identified areas of concern to just two: 1) social communication and 2) restricted interests It is possible that the new medical criteria in DSM 5 will include definitions by behaviors only. There will not be criteria differentiating conditions like those currently known: PDDNOS, Asperger Syndrome, and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder. There will be no differentiation by etiology like Retts Syndrome, Fragile X, etc. This landscape change medically is to look at the spectrum more functionally-with more scientific validity and more about access to services. Therefore, schools will need to be prepared to assess the needs of learners and provide appropriate services.

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Next, let’s review How Autism Impacts a Learner

- Transitions or changes may not be understood resulting in behavior
- Group learning may be confusing and non-meaningful with the result of behavior
- Some individuals need individualization to learn some curriculum. For example manipulatives to show learning, or ways to access the curriculum due to language concerns and lack of experience
- Some need direct teaching for some curriculum content
- Many need predictability and seeing what is ahead, visually seeing what is expected, how much work to do, how long to work

Understanding why they behave like they do and how they process information will make modifications and individualization successful..

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Here are additional ways that an ASD impacts a learner.

- Free choice may need to be taught due to difficulty planning
- They like to please themselves through sensory activities that may interfere with learning
- Confusion results when the student cannot perform and coordinate all processes consistently
- They have a preference for playing alone
- They like to perform routines that remain the same to increase comfort and understanding

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To continue,

- Consequences are difficult to understand
- They may make incorrect assumptions or wrong conclusions based on faulty thinking
- Most want to please and are not purposefully trying to hurt others, lie, being difficult, etc.
- They can learn coping strategies and social skills instead of using aggressive behavior to communicate or solve problems

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So, the logical question follows:

How do staff identify needs and support appropriate programming? You may have district personnel who are well versed and experienced in providing supports to the ASD population. If so, support the staff who are getting good results being champions for this ASD population

If your programs need support, begin with

- Collaboration with team members (AEA and Autism Resource Teams) who understand the student learning needs
 - There are Ziggurat's two assessment tools: (Underlying Characteristics Checklists) named UCC-C and UCC-HF that can guide identification of needs. These checklists look at underlying needs resulting in social, emotional, and behavioral concerns. This Ziggurat model is based on a hierarchy, consisting of five levels that must be addressed for an intervention to be comprehensive.
- A wide range of supports and service needs may be required: from general education to specially designed instruction. The information from the Ziggurat assessment can then applied to create a Comprehensive Autism Planning System called CAPS, that drive the IEP planning process.

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This concludes this webcast about awareness and knowledge of the ASD learner and a bit about their brain processing issues that underlie their behavior. The next webcast shares information about the top seven things administrators should know about working with children with ASD conditions.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Sue Baker using the contact information on this slide.

The Iowa Department of Education appreciates the work that you do on behalf of students with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Thank you!