



Supporting Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their Families

Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia

Guidance Document

1 in 88 children
will be diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

What is an Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are a group of developmental disabilities that cause children to display social and communication skill deficits and behavioral challenges. The Infant & Toddler Connection of VA's definition of ASD includes:

- Impairment in social interaction
- Impairment in communication skills, and
- Restricted and repetitive repertoire of activities and interests.

Many children are referred to the Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia without a formal diagnosis of ASD. If a child is showing characteristics of ASD but does not have a diagnosis, a referral may still be made to the Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia.

What Do We Know about Autism Spectrum Disorders & Early Intervention?

Signs of ASD can be recognized in many children during the first or second year of life.

The earlier signs are recognized, the earlier intervention can begin.

Appropriate early intervention that begins before age 3 can have a significant positive effect of a child's development.

Young children who have a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder are automatically eligible for early intervention supports and services through the Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia.

Early Identification is Key: Know the Early Warning Signs of Autism Spectrum Disorders

There are a number of early warning signs that may indicate an infant or toddler is at risk for being diagnosed with ASD. First Signs.org has suggested the following early warning signs:

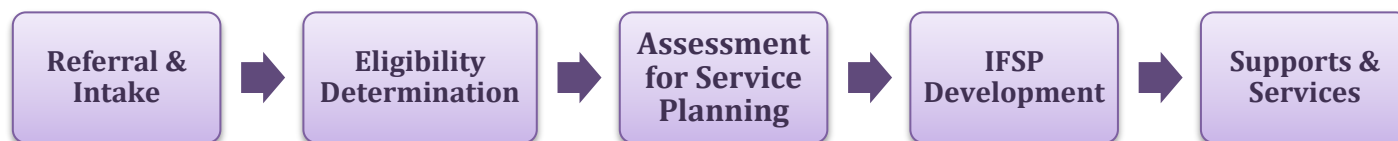
No big smiles or other joyful expressions by 6 months or later	No words by 16 months
No back-and-forth sharing of facial expressions by nine months	No 2-word meaningful phrases (without imitating or repeating) by 24 months
No babbling by 12 months	Loss of speech or babbling at any age
No back-and-forth gestures, such as pointing, reaching, waving by 12 months	Loss of social skills at any age

Remember that even if a child displays any of these early warning signs, it does not necessarily mean that the child has ASD. If you have concerns about a child's development, please contact the Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia at www.infantva.org or 1-800-234-1448.

Recognizing early warning signs and providing the child and family with needed supports and services as early as possible may help to lessen the severity of the symptoms of ASD.

The Early Intervention Process

When a child with ASD is referred to the Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia, he or she begins the early intervention process.



Families are supported along each step of the process by the early intervention team. The team, including the family, a service coordinator, and other professionals (such as a speech language pathologist, educator, and/or occupational therapist) collaborate to develop the *Individualized Family Service Plan* (IFSP) which outlines the assessment, developmental goals, and the supports and services the child and family will receive.

The Goal of Early Intervention

It is the goal of early intervention to ensure that family members, who are best suited to most directly impact the development of their children, have the knowledge and skills they need to interact with their children in ways that support healthy development and progress toward goals.