

Section 1:

General Information on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder commonly known as Autism or ASD, is a Developmental Disorder that impacts a person's social skills, communication skills, along with the presentation of a variety of behavioral challenges. ASD is a complex disorder that presents differently in everyone. It is important that educational evaluators understand the spectrum or range of skill levels within this diagnosis. As evaluators it is imperative that we understand a few characteristics, or "red flags" should not equal a clinical diagnosis or educational label.

- [Pathway to Services and Supports for Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\) \(external website\)](#)
The Minnesota Department of Health Services (DHS) put out a one-page, back-to-back flyer for guardians to reference of the variety of services and supports available if a child is exhibiting signs or is diagnosed with autism.
- [Qualification Guidelines for Standardized Tests \(external website\)](#)
Autism assessments may require qualification standards of the examiner in order to use in evaluations. This qualification guidelines chart from WPS explains the different levels of qualifications needed.

Clinical Information:

The following information will assist an evaluator in understanding the clinical or medical diagnosis of ASD based on the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual -5th Edition (DSM-5). As an educational evaluator it is necessary to familiarize yourself with this criterion, as there are differences between medical requirements for an ASD diagnosis and Minnesota Educational Criteria for ASD. Parents often feel that a medical diagnosis equals educational criteria or vice versa. The educational team needs to be able to explain these differences along with the purpose behind a medical diagnosis and educational eligibility for Special Education.

- [10 things you need to know about CDC's New Autism Data \(external website\)](#)
This link will take you directly to the most current CDC information on autism regarding prevalence and cultural impacts.
- [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association: Autism Overview \(external website\)](#)
ASHA provides information on autism with additional resources specific to a speech pathologist's role on the team.
- [A Snapshot of Autism Spectrum Disorder in MN \(external website\)](#)
This 2-page pdf document from ADDM provides a snapshot of autism in Minnesota as of 2018.
- [Understanding the Spectrum \(external website\)](#)
A comic strip created from the perspective of an individual with autism that describes what is meant by "spectrum" as it relates to autism spectrum disorder.
- [Red Flags / Signs & Symptoms \(external website\)](#)
A direct link to possible "red flags" for autism under the three core areas as reported by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- [Medical vs. Educational Checklist.pdf](#)
Adapted from Assessing Autism Spectrum Disorders by Aspy and Grossman, this two-page document explains the different criteria between the educational versus medical systems.
- [Overlapping Behavioral Characteristics.pdf](#)
Cathy Bruer-Thompson created this list of overlapping characteristics comparing behavioral and related mental health diagnoses in children, including autism.

Minnesota Educational Information

The following information will assist an educational evaluator in understanding the Minnesota Educational Criteria for ASD. Educational criteria place an emphasis on the deficit of social skills, while requiring an additional deficit in EITHER communication or restricted, repetitive behaviors. It is common for a student to demonstrate need in all three areas, but this is not required for educational eligibility. Besides meeting educational

eligibility, a student MUST also demonstrate a need for direct specialized instruction to qualify for an Individualized Education Plan.

- [Minnesota Department of Education ASD Criteria \(external website\)](#)
You can access a pdf copy of the Minnesota Autism Spectrum Disorder eligibility criteria through the link above. Click on the Eligibility Criteria link and select Autism Spectrum Disorder. It updated on 11/8/2019.
- [ASD Core Areas Graphic.pdf](#)
This one-page document gives examples and characteristics that indicate eligibility in MN under each core area for an Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- [ASD Evaluation Flow Chart.pdf](#)
The ASD evaluation flow chart was created to demonstrate, using a graphic, the process of an ASD evaluation from universal screening through evaluation and development of an IEP.