

# Supporting College Students with ASD

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## Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support

Creates, supports, and delivers professional development for career, technical and adult education professionals across Illinois

ICSPS provides **technical assistance**, develops publications, and **facilitates program improvement** strategies for our partners as they relate to **college transition, recruitment, retention, and completion**—encouraging achievement of special populations learners



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### Before We Begin

- Webinar logistics
- We often begin any autism related training with the assumption that the audience has limited knowledge about ASD
- The positive is that we try to take as much into consideration and give as much information as possible without being too overwhelming
- The negative is that those who do have a good understanding of ASD might feel like they are not being given enough new information
- Please capture your questions and get clarification by submitting in the chat box
- Continue to stay in contact after today

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### Learner Outcomes

- Recognize when interacting with a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Describe the characteristics of student with ASD: what it looks like in the college setting
- Identify strategies that can be used to help students on the autism spectrum succeed in college

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### What is ASD?

#### Defining Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):

A neurologically based developmental disorder that affects an individual's ability to communicate, socially interact, and engage in developmentally appropriate behaviors.

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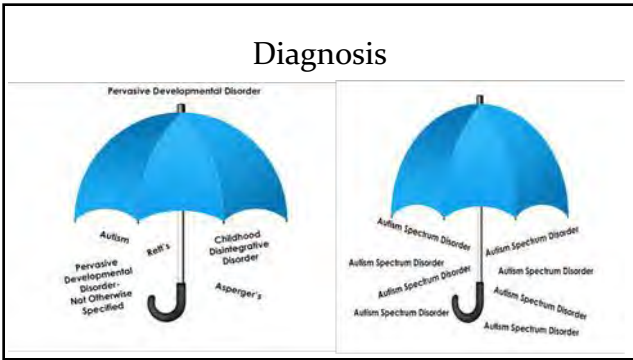
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### Diagnosis




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### Lifelong Impact

- Autism is lifelong
- Early intervention is the best predictor for success and the future impact of ASD




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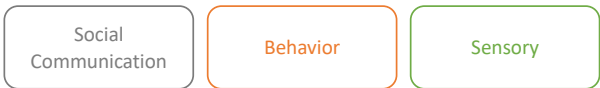
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### AREAS IMPACTED:



Individuals with the same diagnosis may and often do have needs that are unique to them; autism may manifest itself in different ways in different people

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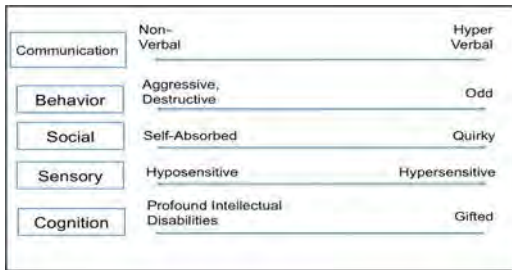
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### THE AUTISM CONTINUUM



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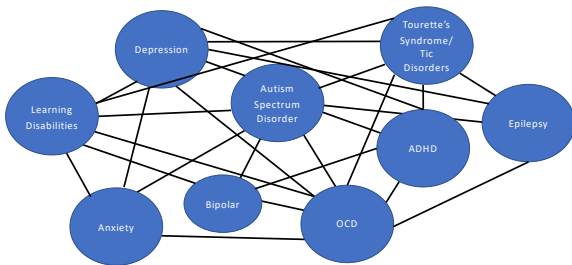
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### Comorbidity



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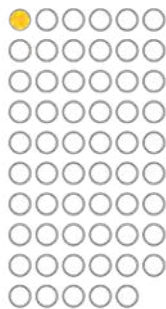
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### Prevalence Change

**1 IN 59**

children age 3-17 have

**Autism Spectrum Disorder**



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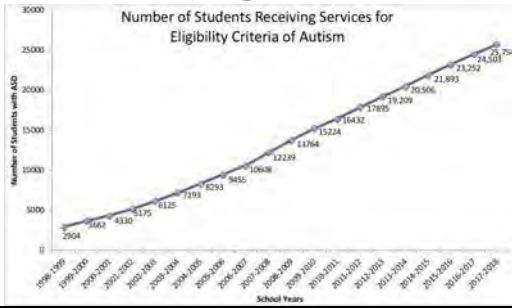
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## Identifying the need in




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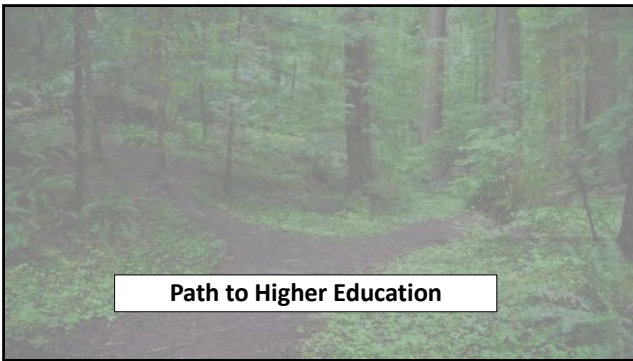
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**Path to Higher Education**

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## Challenges for Students with ASD in Higher Education

*\*Every student on the spectrum is unique and you may or may not see all of these characteristics in any given student*

- Executive Functioning
- Communication
- Social Skills/Relationships
- Campus Life
- Independent Living
- Sensory Challenges

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### By 2020... Current Trends...

35% of young adults (ages 19-23) with ASD have **not had a job** or **received postgraduate education** after leaving high school.

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### Postsecondary Education



Presence of students with ASD is increasing on college campuses



Estimated 1 - 1.9% of the college population with an 80% incomplection rate



Students are entering unprepared in areas of social-communication and executive functions

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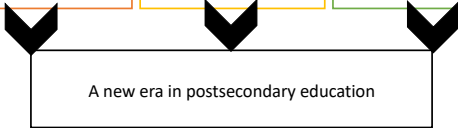
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### Where are we now?

Increased Visibility of students with disabilities

Commitment to diversity and inclusion in postsecondary

Expectations to federal law (ADA)



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### Disclosure

- Often students with autism do not report their disability - this is the student's choice
- In order to receive accommodations, a student will need to disclose
- For students with ASD, this might be especially challenging because of difficulties with self awareness, communication and asking for help
- Because you notice some of the characteristics we have shared with you about ASD, it is best not to make assumptions

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### Recognizing ASD

- May have difficulties with **perspective taking**
- Might have **odd communication**
  - Poor eye contact
  - Odd voice intonation
  - Excessive talking (or talking too little)
  - Abnormal focus on a particular subject/activity
  - May have limited ability to engage in reciprocal conversations (i.e., often focusing on their topic entirely)
  - Repetitive or constricted patterns of speech

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### Recognizing ASD

- **Sensitivity** (or lack thereof) to environmental stimuli
- **Rigidity** around rules or options to solve problems
  - May often focus so much on details that they miss the big picture
  - May resist changes

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## Strategies & Considerations

when interacting with individuals on the Autism Spectrum

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### Classroom

- When talking to the student, use the students name so he knows that you are speaking directly to him.
- Minimize your use of figurative language.
- Do not use sarcasm.
- Talk and move in a calm manner.
- Check for understanding
- Break larger tasks down by providing step by step instructions and allow the individual time to process
- Remember that many individuals with ASD have challenges related to communication skills - may say something without use of their 'filter'

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### When Giving Assignments..

- Be very explicit with your directions and expectations.
- Provide information in writing whenever possible.
- Post critical information, such as due dates, rubrics, and sample work.
- Ask for clarification/feedback regarding critical information either in person, quizzes, or email.
- Give students choices for projects or assignments, keep the number of choices limited to no more than two or three when possible.

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### Assignments

- Many students with ASD are concrete, linear thinkers.
- When brainstorming ideas for large projects, try to find some connection to the student's interest.
- Take time to work one-on-one with the student.
- Know you might need to help the student organize the assignment.
- Set deadlines with clear expectations.

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### Group Work

- Many people on the spectrum have a difficult time working in groups, so try to pair them up with students who will be a good fit.
- Give students specific tasks to complete.
- Check-in with groups.
- Address the student ahead of time with details of the project.

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### Peer Interactions

- Students with ASD interact with the same world that we do, but their interpretation is often different from ours.
- Their perspective is as valid as anyone else's in a classroom, even if it is very unique.
- Many classrooms have a core group of very compassionate students, so use them to your advantage.
- Since many students with ASD might be socially awkward, they can also be rather lonely. When the right students connect with an individual on the spectrum, it can make a huge impact.

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### Student – Teacher Interactions

- Remember that you are the educational leader in the classroom, so you set the precedent and the tone for the entire semester.
- Students on the spectrum respond well to routine.
- Scaffolding and frontloading information can be helpful, especially with transitions.
- Students with ASD might not ever ask for help, so take the initiative when the opportunity arises.
- Find out how the students prefers to communicate. Email?

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### In Any Situation....

- Be aware that each individual on the Autism Spectrum is unique, and no two individuals will react exactly the same to similar situations.
- If a person on the spectrum is doing something inappropriate, try to find out the reason for those actions.
- What some may view as inappropriate behavior might simply be innocent curiosity, a lack of social skills, or the inability to properly communicate. Defining parameters for what is and is not acceptable might prevent further problems.
- Many people on the spectrum report being lonely, so their actions might be an attempt to get attention.

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### Common Accommodations - Big A Accommodations

Accommodations are for academics

- Extended Exam Time
- Private Exam Room
- Notetaker
- Ability to Excuse Self from Class
- Use of Laptop in Class
- Computer for Essay Exam
- Accommodations for Group Projects

What additional accommodations might be needed for students with ASD?

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### The Little 'a' Accommodations

- Resources to faculty and staff
- Communication with faculty and staff on campus
- Explanation of rules/guidelines... conduct and Title IX
- Facilitating interaction
- Social connections
- Explanation of how to get involved in a group or club
- Housing - wellness checks and room or floormate interactions
- Referrals to counseling
- Dining and foods with different options
- Health and Hygiene

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### Three sources of reassurance for students with ASD...

- Rules: Rather than respond to a fluid environment, individuals with ASD often rely on the 'rules' to structure their activities
- Routine: Predictability and consistency are important → interruptions to routines can cause stress
- Prediction: Surprises are stress-inducing

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### What else can I do?

- All of us benefit from these strategies, so not necessary to label anything "autism" – related.
- Remember, VAGUE or AMBIVALENT or SUGAR-COATED instructions are problematic for students.
- Most students with ASD are visual learners. Be sure to share information in a multimodal way. MAKE it VISUAL.
- Breakdown larger tasks into small increments.

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### Tips for Faculty

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What about employment?

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### Employment

-  Disability with highest level of unemployment
-  85% of adults are unemployed
-  50% of young adults between ages 21-26 have held a paid job outside of their household

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### Wrap-up

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is characterized by difficulties with communication skills and social interactions, as well as, repetitious behavior patterns.
- People with ASD have a wide range of abilities.
- Many go on to succeed in college; some have exceptional talents and skills.
- Our goal is to empower students to become advocates for their own education.

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### Web Portal




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*Thank you.*




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