

## A child with an ASD might:

- Not play “pretend” games (e.g. pretend to “feed” a doll)
- Not point at objects to show interest (point at an airplane flying over)
- Not look at objects when another person points at them
- Have trouble relating to others or not have an interest in other people at all
- Avoid eye contact and want to be alone
- Have trouble understanding other people’s feelings or talking about their own feelings
- Prefer not to be held or cuddled or might cuddle only when they want to
- Appear to be unaware when other people talk to them but respond to other sounds
- Be very interested in people, but not know how to talk, play, or relate to them
- Repeat or echo words or phrases said to them, or repeat words or phrases in place of normal language (echolalia)
- Have trouble expressing their needs using typical words or motions
- Repeat actions over and over again
- Have trouble adapting to a change in routine
- Have unusual reactions to the way things smell, taste, look, feel, or sound
- Lose skills they once had (for instance, stop saying words they were using)

## Things grandparents can do to help

- Offer to help with household chores.
- Doing an activity with the siblings that you might not do as a family (swimming, going to the cinema, having a long walk in the park, help with learning to ride a bike, etc).

- Giving one to one time for attention and nurturing — read a story, getting help with homework, cooking together, etc.
- Being available on the phone for chats about things that are concerning the sibling.
- Listen when the child’s parents need to talk.
- Support the decisions they are making, even if you don’t agree with all of them.
- Show that you are interested in the special programs and therapies they have found for the child.
- Learn about autism. A good place to start is the Kentucky’s Family Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders. This comprehensive guide is available at [www.louisville.edu/education/kyautismtraining](http://www.louisville.edu/education/kyautismtraining) or you can contact the Kentucky Autism Training Center to receive a copy of the guide at (502) 852-2467.

### For more information:

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This information was adapted from materials developed by the Autism Society of America, Alaska Autism Resource Center and the Indiana Resource Center for Autism.



# Grandparents and Autism Spectrum Disorders



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# Grandparents and Autism Spectrum Disorder

the child's behavior and development to make a diagnosis.

ASDs occur in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, but are four times more likely to occur in boys than in girls. CDC estimates that between about 1 in 80 and 1 in 240, with an average of 1 in 110, children in the United States have an ASD.

More people than ever before are being diagnosed with an ASD. It is unclear exactly how much of this increase is due to a broader definition of ASDs and better efforts in diagnosis.

Children with autism can make progress if they receive supports and interventions that are appropriate and consistent.

## What is Autism?

Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are a complex neurological disorder. ASD is called a spectrum disorder because it includes a wide range of abilities and differences. Scientists do not know yet exactly what causes this problem. ASDs can impact a person's functioning at different levels, from very mild to severe. There is usually nothing about how a person with ASD that sets them apart from other people, but they may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most people. The thinking and learning abilities of people with ASDs can vary — from gifted to severely challenged. Autistic disorder is the most commonly known type of ASD, but there are others, including “pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified” (PDD-NOS) and Asperger Syndrome.

Diagnosing ASDs can be difficult since there is no medical test, like a blood test, to diagnose the disorders. The assessment team looks at



## Did You Know?

Grandparents caring for grandchildren in their homes often qualify for tax credits (see tax advisor for more information).

There may also be support groups and/or agencies in your community that can help.

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