About Autism

Autism, a neurological condition, involves impairment in communication skills, difficulty relating to others, and repetitive behaviors.

These characteristics can look very different in different children. Some characteristics may be easy to see while others are more subtle.

Following are only a few examples of how autism may appear.

Signs of Autism

DIFFICULTIES IN REGULATION
Children with autism may not look at your face when you are interacting with them. They may smile infrequently and may have sensory sensitivities, making it difficult to regulate touch, sounds, sights, smells, and tastes.

DIFFICULTIES IN ENGAGEMENT
Children with autism may be uncomfortable making eye contact. Some may not babble, point, enjoy shared interests, or respond to his or her name.

DIFFICULTIES WITH SOCIAL INTERACTION
Children with autism often do not imitate, may lack a cohesive, steady flow of communication or have delayed speech, and sometimes do not engage in pretend play.

DIFFICULTIES WITH REPETITIVE BEHAVIOR
Children with autism may demonstrate an increase preoccupation with certain toys or activities, demonstrate an unusual adherence to routines or be persistent with repetitive motor movements.
We’re Here to Help

University Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment, or UCAN, a multi-disciplinary team of professionals concerned with autism and neurodevelopmental disorders in children, provides and develops standards for quality assessment and training, and contributes to knowledge for differential diagnoses.

The core value of the UCAN Assessment Team includes facilitating open access to diagnostic evaluation for children in need. This means providing individualized outcomes from assessment that has a meaningful impact on children and families and enables timely and affordable access to assessment.

As a group of professionals we operate dynamically as a team and are motivated to provide service to the community. We collaborate and have a common focus in scholarly pursuit of knowledge and freely share individual expertise and knowledge.

The purpose of the UCAN Assessment Team is to improve differential diagnosis between autism and other neurodevelopment disorders. We understand the widespread need in Northern Nevada and rural communities.

Therefore, we offer training and education to other professionals to enable others to assess children to identify autism. We provide specialized training for students and burgeoning professionals in detection of autism.

Finally, we are establishing a stable database for research in identification and classification of autism.

Early Diagnosis is Critically Important

The diagnosis of autism should be made as early as possible so therapies can begin. The UCAN Assessment Team sees children between the ages of 18-months and 18-years, and embraces early identification and diagnosis that leads to quality treatment and care.

The cornerstone of treatment for children with autism is language/communication therapy. Other therapies such as occupational therapy, behavior management, and social skills training are also often helpful.

The team makes recommendations for appropriate therapies depending on the individual need of the child and family.

This combined effort of the different disciplines assists in the facilitation and follow through with recommendations made by the team to families for support services.

Further, the multidisciplinary nature of the team adheres to the recommendations made by the National Institute of Health and the U.S. Department of Special Education that identification of autistic spectrum disorders should include a formal multidisciplinary evaluation of social behavior, language and nonverbal communication, adaptive behavior, motor skills, atypical behaviors and cognitive status by a team of professionals experienced with autistic spectrum disorder.

Collaborative Partnerships

The UCAN Assessment Team is a diverse group of professionals from different disciplines and agencies throughout Northern Nevada. This collaborative partnership includes:

- University of Nevada, Reno Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology;
- University of Nevada, Reno Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences;
- Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities (NCED)
- Northern Nevada Child and Adolescent Services
- Nevada Early Intervention Services
- Washoe County School District
- Other community private practitioners

To learn more about UCAN referral process, autism, and treatment options, contact:

UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR AUTISM AND NEURODEVELOPMENT (UCAN TEAM)

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