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AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

- Is Higher Ed Ready?
- Understanding Students On The Spectrum
- ADA/Section 504
- Reasonable Accommodations/Personal Services
- Beyond Reasonable Accommodations: Support Program Considerations And Development

ASD STATISTICS: IS HIGHER ED READY?

1 in 60 births

Fastest-growing developmental disability

10 - 17 % annual growth

Growth comparison during the 1990s:

U.S. Population increase: 13%

Disabilities increase: 16%

ASD increase: 172%

\$90 billion annual cost

90% of costs are in adult services

Cost of lifelong care can be reduced by 2/3 with early diagnosis and intervention

Within 10 years, the annual cost will be \$200-400 billion



Source: MIT autism conference, 2012

In 2014, CDC reported 1 in 68 of 8 year olds is on the autism spectrum

DSM-V: UNDERSTANDING THE SPECTRUM

DSM-V DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

- Persistent social interaction and social communication impairment
- Restricted interests and repetitive behaviors



DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

Specifically, people with ASD must demonstrate (either currently or historical examples):

- Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity, ranging, for example, from abnormal social approach and failure of normal back-and-forth conversation; to reduced sharing of interests, emotions, or affect; to failure to initiate or respond to social interactions.
- Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction, ranging, for example, from poorly integrated verbal and nonverbal communication; to abnormalities in eye contact and body language or deficits in understanding and use of gestures; to a total lack of facial expressions and nonverbal communication.
- Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understand relationships, ranging, for example, from difficulties adjusting behavior to suit various social contexts; to difficulties in sharing imaginative play or in making friends; to absence of interest in peers.

YOU SAY TOMATO, I SAY AUTISM, AUTISM, AUTISM

ASPERGER'S is no longer a separate diagnosis – it is on the autism continuum and diagnosed as autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

DEFICIT CONTINUUM



ACCOMMODATIONS – WHERE’S WALDO?

A wide range of functioning and abilities seen across individuals diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder

Difficult to generalize beyond recognition of communication and social skill challenges

Need to find Waldo - identify individual needs of each student on spectrum



COMMON AREAS OF NEED

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Diagnostic criteria establishes all students with ASD have challenges with receptive or expressive communication.
- Often subtle

ACCOMMODATIONS

- Providing the instructor's lecture notes or a note taker to focus on important information
- Providing study guides for tests
- Allowing a longer verbal response time
- Allow important exchanges of information to be in written form
- Encourage instructors to be clear, concise, concrete and logical when communicating (don't assume what students truly understand)

COMMON AREAS OF NEED

SOCIAL CHALLENGES

- Understanding others perspectives, sharing space and making eye contact.
- Many high functioning ASD students have social anxiety and difficulty negotiating, working in pairs or groups
- May not understand the “unwritten” classroom etiquette and will often misinterpret facial expressions or other non-verbal cues

ACCOMMODATIONS

- Allow short class breaks and/or allow the student to have a “social buffering” object which might include a computer, book or other object that initially might seem distracting or “out of place”
- Respect the student’s chosen level of eye contact without negative judgment
- If there is group work the faculty may assist in the formation and monitoring of pairs or groups to help promote inclusion of the student
- Sharing written rules for asking questions or participating in class discussion and other classroom logistics (as needed) may support an ASD student

COMMON AREAS OF NEED

SENSORY DIFFERENCES

- DSM-V (2013) includes reactivity to sensory input in diagnostic criteria
- Extreme over sensitivity, or under sensitivity to input from the environment to the five senses

ACCOMMODATIONS

- Allowing hats, sunglasses and tinted lens glasses to be worn and allowing ear plugs or ear phones
- Allowing student to choose seat and help to assure it is always available
- If requested by the student, an alternative writing instrument for tests and assignments and/or a computer for in class work, tests and assignments
- Allow a small sensory item if brings comfort in class.

COMMON AREAS OF NEED

COPING WITH ANXIETY AND STRESS

- May engage in stress relief activities that look odd or make others feel discomfort
- Body rocking, pacing, waving or flapping hands or fingers repetitively, chewing on clothing or body
- “lecturing” on a topic of interest or displaying the “opposite” emotion for the situation
- May abruptly leave with no explanation

ACCOMMODATIONS

- Discreetly ask the student if something is overwhelming and/or ask if the student needs help or wants to leave
- Do not discourage or interrupt behavior unless truly disruptive and understand that student does not intend to be disrespectful
- Allow sensory items and/or other “comfort” objects.
- Agree on a cue that the instructor can give to signal to the student that it is okay/time to leave
- Agree on a signal to inform the instructor when the student is overwhelmed or confused.

COMMON AREAS OF NEED

MOTOR SKILLS

- Fine and gross motor skill challenges
- Motor planning and poor awareness of body in space might affect writing, drawing, turning pages, using utensils, playing an instrument, using locks and keys, and manipulating small objects

ACCOMMODATIONS

- Allow a computer for in class work, tests and assignments
- Provide a note taker
- Allow work assignments to be completed at a slower pace
- Provide models and step by step instruction
- Provide extra test time
- Provide readers and scribes (or assistive tech that reads and takes notes)

COMMON AREAS OF NEED

LEARNING PROFILES

- Often excel creatively in a non-conventional way.
- Tend to have excellent long term and rote memory abilities.
- Many benefit if like and trust an instructor before performing in a class.

POSSIBLE ACCOMMODATIONS

- Provide review sheets, work checklists, and “sub” deadlines and/or intermittent “check-ins”
- Provide hands on learning, models, demonstrations and other visuals
- Pair with peer mentors who might help with feedback and provide “proof-read” opportunities and ongoing structure to keeping on target
- Provide reinforcement at every opportunity allowing advanced negotiation of deadlines, extra time for tests, and/or a separate “quiet” place for tests
- Encourage the use of calendars (computer, traditional, phone w/alarms)

ACCOMMODATION OR PERSONAL SERVICE?

If you have met one person with ASD,
you have met one person with ASD.

What are “reasonable accommodations” vs. “personal services?”

AUTISM ACCOMMODATION

ADA Title II

Applies to state and local governments and requires institution to provide people with disabilities equal opportunity to participate in programs, services and activities

Section 504/Rehabilitation Act

States that "no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under" any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance

AUXILIARY AID OR PERSONAL SERVICE?

34 CFR 104.44: Academic adjustments

(d) Auxiliary aids. (1) A recipient to which this subpart applies shall take such steps as are necessary to ensure that no handicapped student is denied the benefits of, excluded from participation in, or otherwise subjected to discrimination because of the absence of educational auxiliary aids for students with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills.

(2) **Auxiliary aids** may include taped texts, interpreters or other effective methods of making orally delivered materials available to students with hearing impairments, readers in libraries for students with visual impairments, classroom equipment adapted for use by students with manual impairments, and other similar services and actions. Recipients need not provide attendants, individually prescribed devices, readers for personal use or study, or other devices or services of a personal nature.



GOING BEYOND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

- Assess students to help determine their interests, abilities, goals, challenges and support needs to create a success plan
- Develop opportunities to engage students in and out of classroom to help with academic, social, campus and community connections
- Connect with campus and community resources to help with transition from college to career
- Need staff to do it!

RUTGERS

- College Support Program for Students on Autism Spectrum (CSP)
- Established under Student Health Services/Counseling, ADAP and Psychiatric Services
- **Fee based! But fee part of “cost of education” so considered in financial aid/loan programs**
- Collaborative - Offices of Undergraduate Admissions, Disability Services, Academic Deans, Learning Centers, Counseling Center (CAPS), Career Services, Student Employment, Residence Life, Student Life, Deans of Students, program advisors and faculty

RUTGERS

- Tours of Rutgers University
- Individualized orientation to transportation Resources
- Accessing campus resources
- Learning to reside with room- and floor-mates
- Managing life skills
- Participating in on- and off-campus activities
- Managing academic coursework
- Planning and preparing for employment
- Weekly meetings with the coordinator
- Assistance with defining academic, organizational, and life goals
- Strategies to meet identified goals
- Trained Peer Mentors
- Social Events
- Parent Workshops
- Referrals & Follow-Up with academic and support services
- Referrals for psychotherapy or counseling when requested

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

- Opportunities for Postsecondary Success (OPS)
- Under umbrella of Department of Occupational Therapy
- Initial funding highly supported through grants, pursuing ongoing private and public grant funds
- Also collaborates with many campus units
- Also provides personal service options similar to CSP
- Emphasizes measuring student progress and tracking data for both student and program success

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

The University of Arkansas Autism Support Program:

- Supports students in academics, social skills, and transitioning to independent adult roles
- Academic coaches assist with course registration, content tutoring, time management, organization, and communicating successfully with instructors
- Student life staff helps students manage dorm life, interact with peers, and take advantage of the myriad of clubs, sporting, and cultural opportunities on campus and in the community
- Staff works closely faculty and administrative offices including Enrollment Services, the Center for Educational Access, the Enhanced Learning Center, Residential Life, and Student Activities.
- Communicates regularly with parents regarding student progress and any
- Students receive 15 to 20 hours of direct contact each week with program staff, including academic coaches, mentors, and the program director

TAKEAWAYS

1. ASD student numbers increasing rapidly
2. Must reasonably accommodate, but not at level of personal services
3. Programs offering personal services, a heightened level of support, may increase quality and success of education
4. May include expense in student “cost of education” for financial aid/loan purposes (range of \$3,000 - \$6,000 semester)
5. Consider grants or collaborations with local or state ASD support resources
6. Identify best home base to oversee program – Health center? Relevant academic program? Student affairs office?
7. Collaborate with many offices on campus to ensure success



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