



Saskatchewan
Ministry of
Health



Autism Spectrum Disorders

What are the Autism Spectrum Disorders?

Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) show delays in communication and social interaction, and display unusual patterns of behaviours, activities and interests.

Approximately one out of 150 children in Canada has an ASD. ASDs usually appear during the first three years of life. Although we have not discovered the true causes of ASDs, scientists have found a genetic basis. This suggests it may run in families, but there is still a lot to learn about other possible causes.

There are five ASDs; three of which are most common: *Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified* (PDD-NOS).



Signs to look for

Early indicators include:

- No babbling (stringing sounds together to make sentences) by 12 months of age
- No gestures (pointing, waving bye-bye, etc.) by 12 months of age
- No response to their name by 12 months of age
- No single words by 16 months of age
- No two-word spontaneous phrases by 24 months of age

Difficulties with social interaction

- May withdraw from others
- May not seek attention or actively engage with other people
- May not follow or try pointing to show interest in something
- May not turn to respond to their name

Communication problems

- Difficulties in verbal (spoken) and non-verbal (gestures, facial expression, body language) communication. This may range from no speech at all to full sentences that are odd in the way they are spoken or their meaning.
- Speaking style may appear robotic or scripted from TV, repetitive or “echoing”, use of words with no obvious meaning, or use of “giant” words (multiple words used as a single word – “whatisthis”)
- May not start talking until much later than their peers

Unusual behaviours, interest and activities

- May have highly specific and focused interests (e.g., obsessions with trains or maps) to the exclusion of other things
- May be very rigid in routines (taking the same route to school every day, playing with a toy in only one way, resisting schedule changes)
- May show repetitive actions such as hand-flapping, rocking, etc.



Services and Supports in Saskatchewan

A variety of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) services and supports are available to individuals through the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Services.

The Ministry of Education provides support to all children and youth, including children with special needs, through Early Childhood Intervention Programs and/or Boards of Education.

The Ministry of Social Services provides flexible funding to people through *Communities Working Together: Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Citizens with Cognitive Disabilities*, and programs offered within the Community Living Division.

The Ministry of Health provides global funding to the health regions for the delivery of health programs and services including services to the ASD population. In addition, the Ministry of Health offers the *Framework and Action Plan for Autism Spectrum Disorders Services in Saskatchewan* (Framework and Action Plan) in every health region.

The Framework and Action Plan provides evidence-supported intervention options including behavioural, visual or social strategies through individual programming developed by the client's service team and family. The Framework and Action Plan builds on and joins with other services available in the health regions and community to meet the needs of the clients it serves. The Framework and Action Plan also provides respite/seasonal programming support to children and youth with ASD.

If you suspect an ASD, contact the *Framework and Action Plan for Autism Spectrum Disorders Services in Saskatchewan* in your health region.

An ASD Consultant will complete a screening to determine your child's level of risk for an ASD and link you to services and supports that best meet the needs of your child.

Should your child's level of risk be high for an ASD, the ASD Consultant will make a referral for an assessment and begin development of an individual program plan for your child and family.



Saskatchewan
Ministry of
Health

Regional Contacts:

Athabasca Health Authority

Athabasca Health Authority 306-439-2200

Cypress Health Region

E.I Wood Building 350 Cheadle Street West
Swift Current, SK S9H 4G3 306-778-5135

Five Hills Health Region

Autism Spectrum Disorders Program
679 Hall Street Moose Jaw, SK S6H 2S1 306-694-8366

Heartland Health Region

P.O. Box 1538 Unity Sub office
Unity, SK S0K 4L0 306-228-6330 Ext: 222

Kelsey Trail Health Region

P.O. Box 389 Nipawin, SK S0E 1E0 306-862-7249

Keewatin Yatthe Health Region

Health Promotion 306-833-3381

Mamewetan Churchill River Health Region

Community Health Services 306-425-4800

Prairie North Health Region

Community Health Services
Co-Op Plaza Suite 101 4910 – 50th Street
Lloydminster, SK S9V 0Y5 306-820-6120

Prince Albert Parkland Health Region

Mental Health Services Intake Services
P.O. Box 3003 Prince Albert, SK S6V 6G1 306-765-6055

Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region

Child and Youth Services Intake Services
1680 Albert Street Regina, SK S4P 2S6 306-766-6700

Saskatoon Health Region

Autism Services
609 – 25th Street East
Saskatoon, SK S7K 0L7 306-665-7013

Sun Country Health Region

Child and Youth Services
P.O Box 2003 900 Saskatchewan DriveA
Weyburn, SK S4H 2Z9 306-842-8618

Sunrise Health Region Children's Therapy Program

200 Bradbrooke Drive
Yorkton, SK S3N 2K5 306-786-0188