



Autism Spectrum Disorder and the Child Welfare System

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INTRODUCTION

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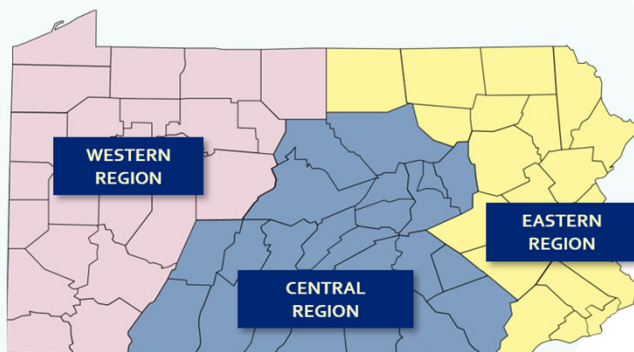
How does ASERT support the community?

- Support and resource navigation through the ASERT **Resource Center**
- Free, catered **trainings**
- Maps of **support groups** and other community resources
- Catered data analysis to support **advocacy** and community activities
- Development of resources including, **informative content, infographics, social stories, and newsletters**



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Autism Services, Education, Resources, & Training Collaborative (ASERT)

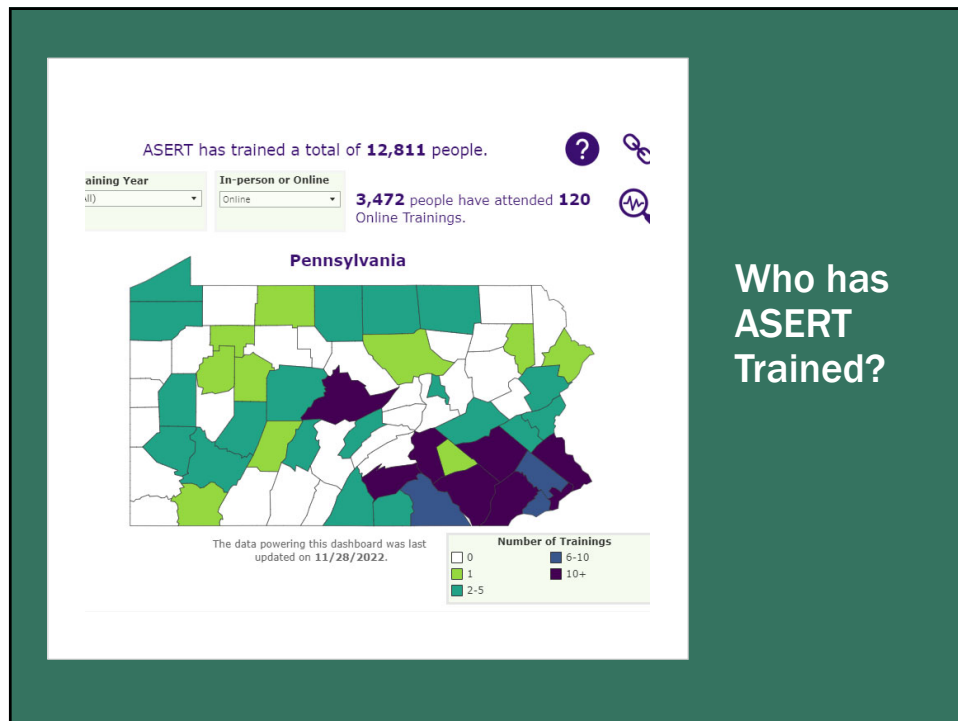


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Role and Purpose of ASERT

- 1**
Bring together local, regional, and statewide resources
- 2**
Support (not replace) existing community efforts and activities
- 3**
Develop innovative projects based on data, community need, and commonwealth priorities

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Who has ASERT Trained?

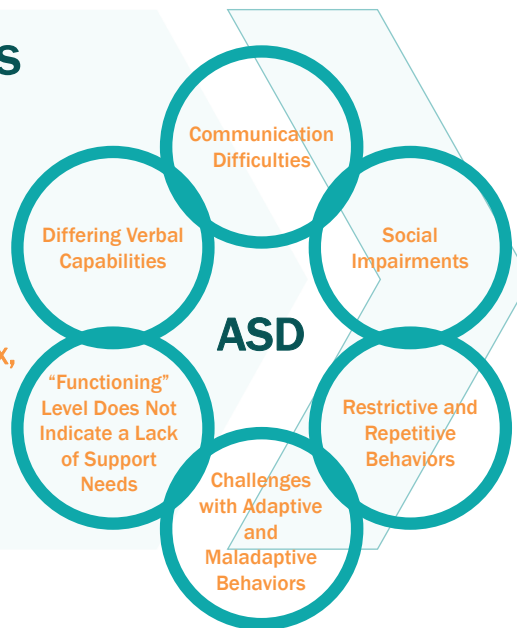
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AUTISM 101

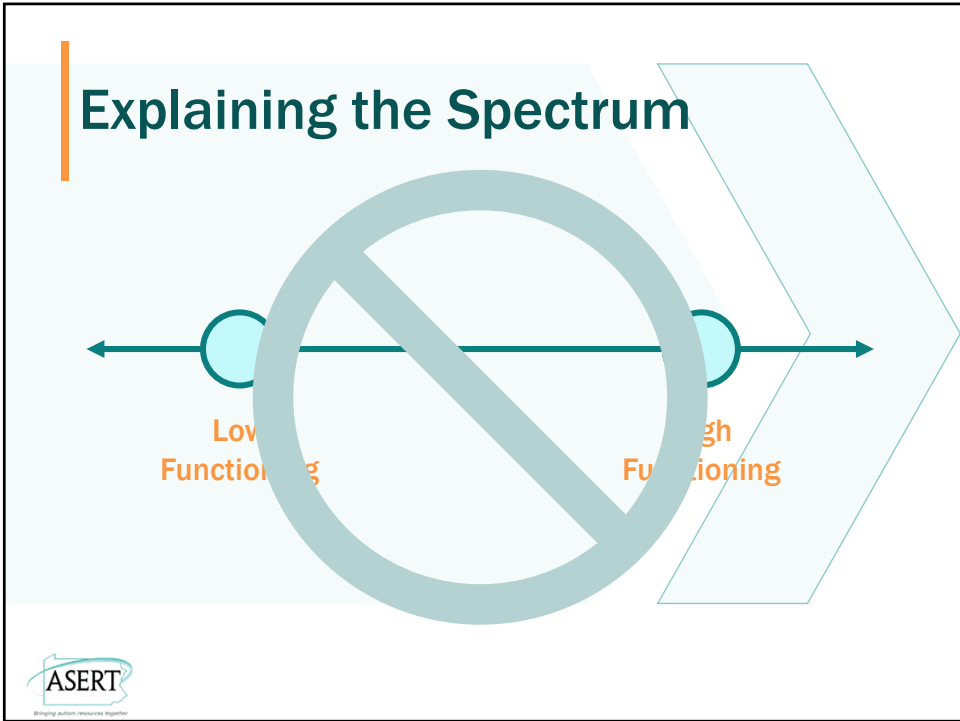
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Characteristics

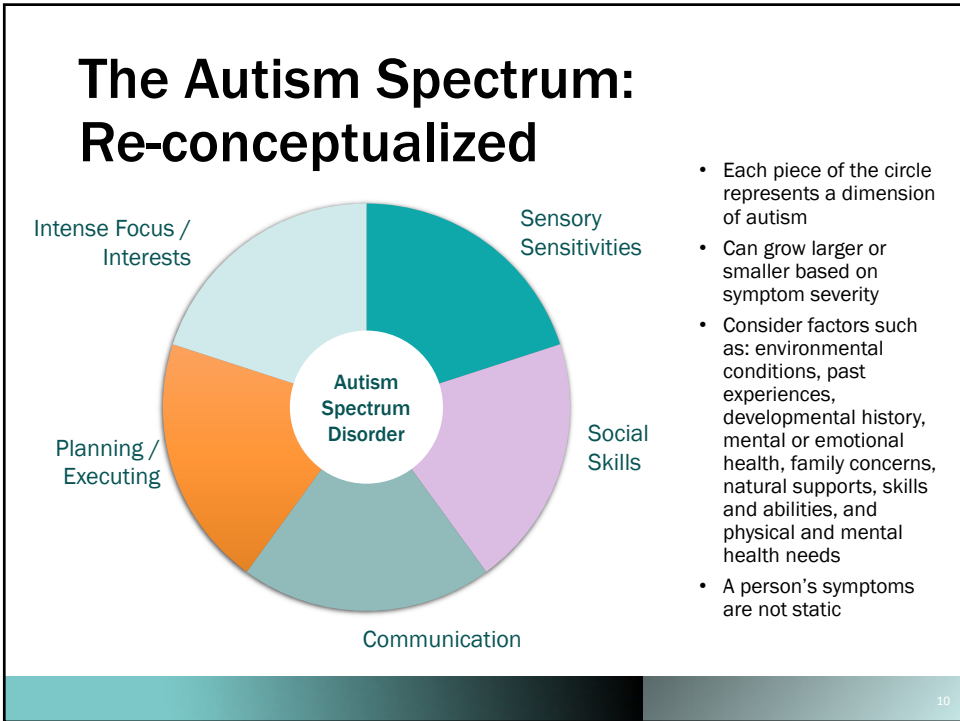
- Autism has **no physical characteristics**
- Autism is a **broad, complex, spectrum** disorder



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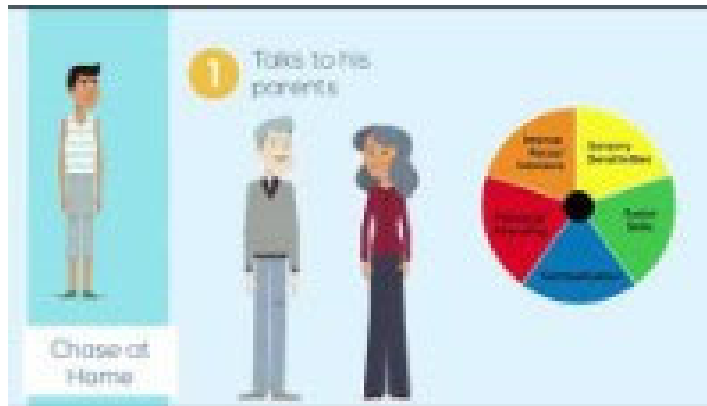


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The Autism Spectrum Wheel in Action



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Autistic Individual Perspective



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Sensory Sensitivities and Supports

Sensory Sensitivities

- Temperature
- Lighting
- Noise levels
- Physical boundaries
- Scents or odors
- High tolerance for pain

Tools and Supports

- Visual schedules
- First- then boards
- Sensory objects or fidget toys
- Avoid quick movements and loud noises
- Do not touch, unless absolutely necessary



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Autism May Affect the Sensory System

Stimming refers to **specific repetitive behaviors**, it is almost always a symptom of autism.

- Most experts say that it's a tool for self-regulation and **self-calming**. It is the individual's way of dealing with and processing the overstimulation they are experiencing.
- Persons living with autism stim to help themselves **manage** anxiety, fear, anger, excitement, anticipation, and other strong emotions.



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Autism May Affect the Sensory System

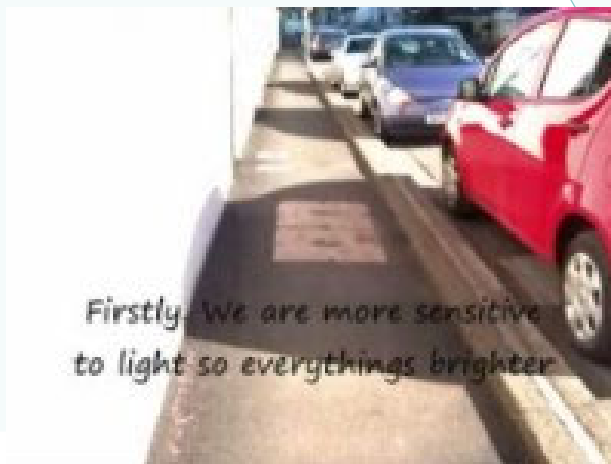
What does it look like?

- **Body Movement** Hand-flapping, Finger flicking, Rocking, Spinning, etc.
- **Auditory Repetition** Words and phrases (echolalia), making unusual sounds or loud noises like babbling.
- **Tactile** Scratching or rubbing the skin with hands or an external object. Licking and/or chewing their body parts or licking an object. Smelling objects or hands or other people.
- **Possible Self-Harm Behaviors** Hitting themselves with their hands or banging their heads against the wall.



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Sensory Experience Example



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An Individual with Autism May...

- Act deaf, not respond to your commands or his/her name
- Not tell you if they are hurt
- Have an impaired sense of danger
- Be drawn to water
- Have a heightened flight or fight response
- Engage in repetitive behavior
- Avoid eye contact
- Try to touch your badge, handcuffs, etc.



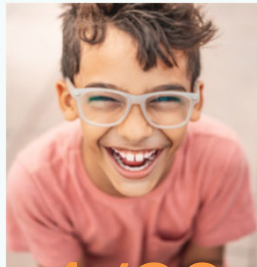
Source: Debbaudt, Dennis. Autism Safety Education & Training: aset911.com

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Sex Assigned at Birth Prevalence



1/44



1/36



1/117



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Autism Presentation Differences

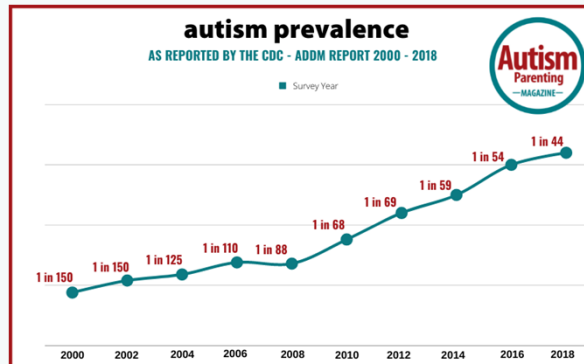
- Tendency to **imitate others in social interactions**, which may be exhausting
- **Better linguistic abilities** developmentally
- Restricted interests tend to involve **people/animals** rather than objects/things
- **Avoid instructions** (passively)



Source: nature.com

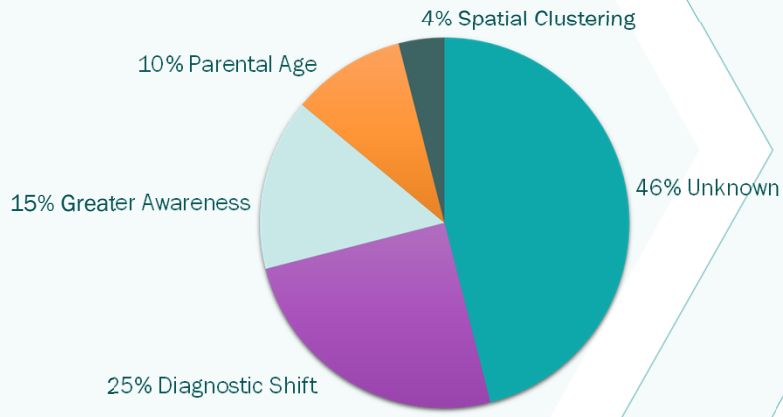
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Increasing Prevalence



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Why is the prevalence increasing?



Source: nature.com

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Autism is a Lifespan Disorder

Autism is not a childhood disorder and does not go away in adulthood, though the symptoms and presentation may change.



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Traits in Social Interaction

01 Lack of Attention to Faces

02 Reduced Eye Contact

03 Lack of Social Reciprocity

04 Difficulty in Receiving and Expressing Emotions

05 Difficult in Developing Peer Relationships

06 Difficulty in Using Nonverbal Social Communication

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Traits in Communication Differences

01 Absence or Delay in Language

02 Stereotyped or Repetitive Use of Language

03 Difficulties in Initiating or Maintaining Conversation

04 Deficits in Voice Tone

05 Lack of Social Play

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Language

- Speak clearly and concisely
- Speak in a calm, quiet voice
- One command at a time
- Ask if they understand
- No slang or abstract language
- Give them time to respond
- Repeat or rephrase
- One person talks at a time



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Echolalia

IMMEDIATE

“Do you have ID?”
“Do you have ID?”

*Keep in mind when giving a choice, they may always repeat the last choice.

DELAYED

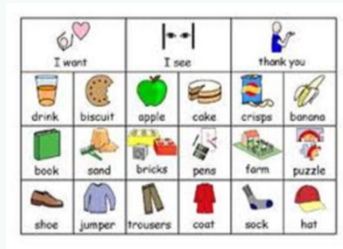
“Do you have ID?”
“Can you hear me now? Good.”



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Communication Differences

Tools/Strategies for Lack of/Delayed Language



Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)



Alternative Communication



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Traits in Restricted or Repetitive Behavior

- 01** Stereotyped, Repetitive Motor Mannerisms
- 02** Restricted Interests
- 03** Inflexible Adherence to Routines or Rituals
- 04** Preoccupation with Parts of Objects

STRATEGY

Quiet



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Change is a Challenge

- Change causes reactions
- Unknown can be scary
- Same is “safe”

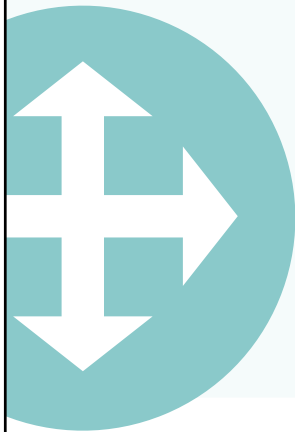
How Change May Appear

- Defiance
- Stubbornness
- Melting Down
- Shutting Down
- Failure to Adjust



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Preparing for Change



- Provide **visual cues**
- **Practice**
- Give advance **notice**
- Keep **sensory needs** in mind
- No **vague or abstract** language



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Overstimulation

Signs of Possible Overstimulation

- Flapping
- Pacing
- Rocking
- Scripting
- Loud Verbalizations

Which Can Lead To

- Tantrums (e.g., yelling, flapping)
- Eloping (running away)
- Self Injurious Behavior (biting self, hitting head)
- Aggression



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TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

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Safety is the Goal

A better understanding of autism will **help keep you, the individual, and the community safe**. It will also help prepare you for interacting with individuals with autism to better **support them and their families**.



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Trauma

Consider Possible Traumas to an Individual with Autism

Bullying

Physical Abuse

Emotional Abuse

History of Restraints



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How to Approach Someone with Autism



Slowly and cautiously



Give verbal warnings



Keep your voice quiet and calm

If possible, do not put your hands on the individual



Ask if they understand what you are saying



Ask to repeat back what you said



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In other words, Be S.A.F.E.R.

S

Stay calm

A

Ask clearly

F

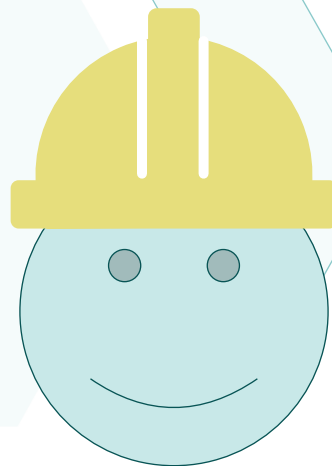
Facilitate understanding

E

Explain the process

R

Repeat commands



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Dos and Don'ts for Positive Interaction

DO

- ✓ Do maintain a safe distance
- ✓ Do reassure that you are there to help
- ✓ Do model the behavior you are requesting
- ✓ Use visuals if possible
- ✓ Do recognize that change is very difficult

DON'T



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Dos and Don'ts for Positive Interaction

DO

DON'T

- X Don't stop repetitive behavior if not injuring self or others
- X Don't touch the individual
- X Don't take preferred items or objects if they are not dangerous
- X Don't use quick or sudden movements
- X Don't give too many commands or choices
- X Don't interpret their silence or failure to respond as non-compliance



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CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES AND AUTISM



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TIPS & TRICKS

- Use visual schedules
- Have a quiet room/space
- Use a motivational system
- Have communication strategy in place
- Be mindful of triggers and escalating behaviors
- Give alternative, replacement activities

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TIPS AND TRICKS CONTINUED

- Lack of eye contact doesn't mean they aren't listening
- Pay attention to socially isolated individuals and engage them!
- Prepare individuals for transitions and schedule changes
- Do individuals understand what you're asking them? Give choices
- Give clear instructions and set clear boundaries/expectations



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Interviewing and Court Testimony

- Do not dismiss non-verbal individuals
- Do they use a communication device
- Presume competence
- Include someone who is familiar with them in interview

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Interviewing/Court Testimony (Continued)

Determine how the individual communicates (verbal/gestures/device)	Use the individual's words (especially if they use a communication device)	Build trust and rapport/caring attitude
Use visuals	Take breaks	Timing of the interview is important
Ensure the physical space is conducive to sensory needs	Avoid Infantilization	Use same interviewer every time

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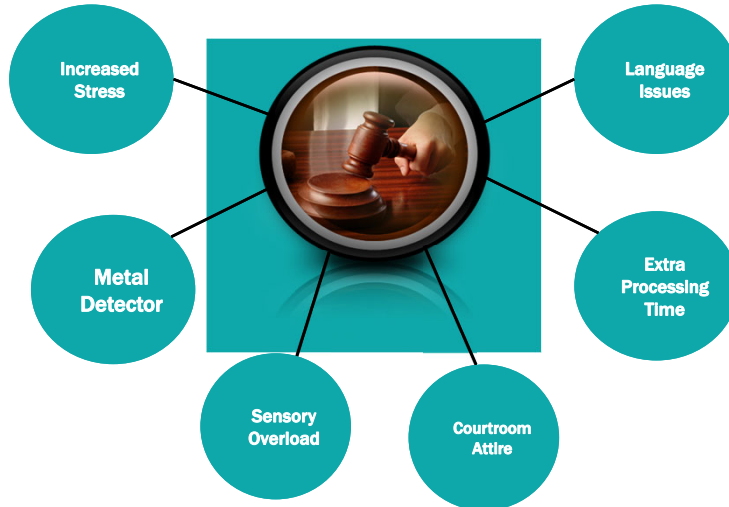
Information from Caregiver

- Unless the individual with autism requires immediate intervention, discuss with the caregiver **how best to approach** them.
- **Distraction techniques** should be embraced as appropriate.
- Ask specifically about **techniques to question** the individual with autism, how to approach them and **textures or gestures to avoid**.
- **Disseminate** to the entire staff.



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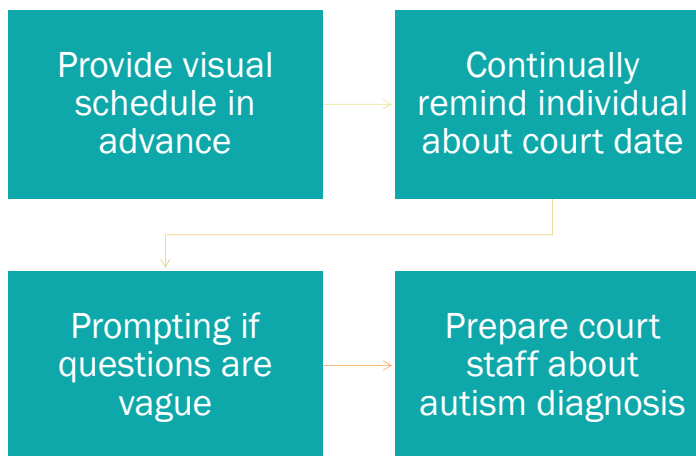
APPEARING IN COURT



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APPEARING IN COURT (CONT.)

Tools/Strategies for Supporting Individual in Court



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FOSTER CARE/OUT OF HOME PLACEMENT: NEW ROUTINE

Tools/Strategies for Easing Transition



Provide extra supervision during unstructured activities



Allow for alone time after group activities



Assign appropriate chores

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OUT OF HOME PLACEMENT: NEW ROUTINE

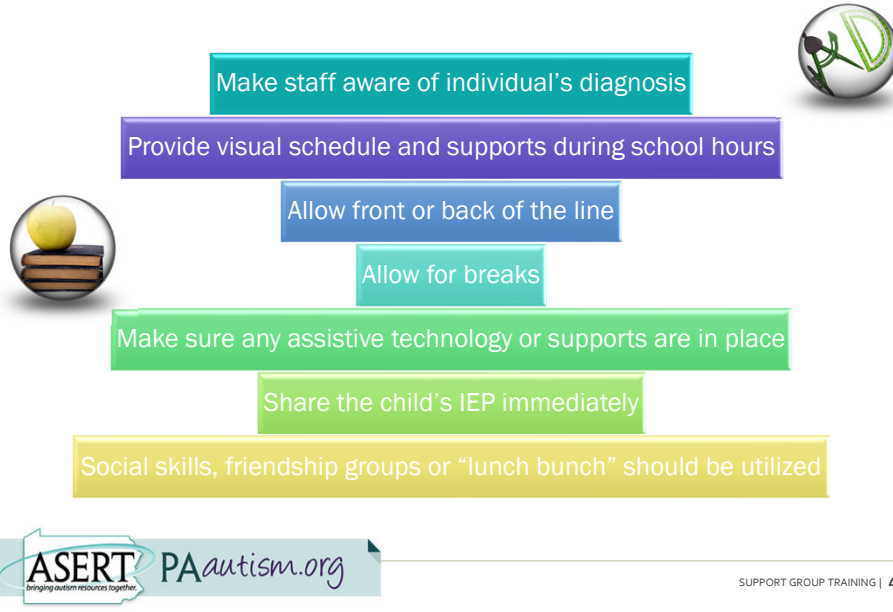
Tools/Strategies for Coping with a New Routine

Daily Schedule	
1 arrive at school	7 Journal
2 check in	8 P.E.
3 reading	9 lunch
4 writing	10 art
5 math	11 shared reading
6 recess	12 bus



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OUT OF HOME PLACEMENT: ATTENDING SCHOOL



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CONNECTING/BONDING



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HYGIENE



Use the same soap, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, etc. the child used at home



Establish a routine with pictures for showers, brushing teeth, toileting, etc.



Try and utilize the same hair salon, dentist, doctor if possible



Find a "sensory friendly" brush/comb



Give a warning when it is time to brush teeth, trim nails, etc.

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SLEEPING ISSUES

Tools/Strategies for Sleep



Provide a sensory-friendly environment (e.g., low lights, quiet, weighted blanket, etc.)



Establish a consistent bedtime routine



Time to transition to bedtime



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EATING AND FOOD SENSITIVITIES



Texture friendly foods

Consider the brand

Sensory-friendly environment

What was eaten at home?

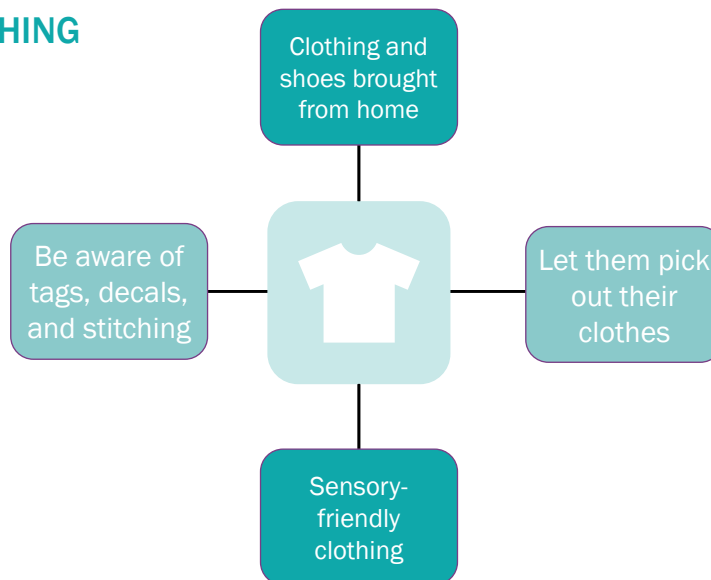
Have their favorites available

Specific utensils



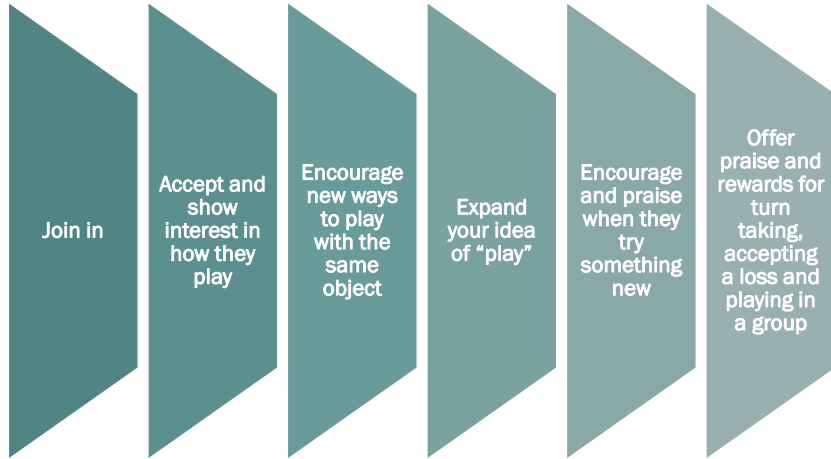
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CLOTHING



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PLAY TIME



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Wandering

Types

- Goal-Directed Wandering
- Other
- Fleeing/Bolting

Strategies

- Alert local law enforcement/EMS about individual's wandering
- Alert neighbors and local businesses
- Enroll child/adult in swim lessons
- Explore areas of fascination in a safe, supervised way
- Create visuals such as stop signs by all doors



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Resource Spotlights

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Creating an ASERT Account

The screenshot displays the ASERT website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and a navigation menu with icons for Contact Us, About Us, Autism in PA, Favorites, Resources, Events, Support Groups, and eLearning. A prominent orange box highlights the 'Login/New Account' button in the top right corner. Below the navigation, a section titled 'Select a category to view resources' features four image-based category tiles: 'Individuals with Autism', 'Parents & Caregivers', and two others partially visible.

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JUSTICE RESOURCE COLLECTION

Are you looking for resources about autism and the justice system?



www.pautism.org/justice

Background Information

ASERT Justice Trainings

Social Stories

Resources for Professionals










JUSTICE SYSTEM SOCIAL STORIES

<p>Police Officer's Job</p> <p>The law says the police officer may put handcuffs on me. The handcuffs will be cold and hard.</p>	<p>An officer may search my body to make sure I don't have anything on me that could be harmful.</p>	<p>The police officer may try to take the handcuffs off me. The police officer may remove the handcuffs once the situation is safe.</p>	<p>Detention Center: Part 1: Your Arrest</p> <p>A detention center is a secure building for kids who break the law.</p>	<p>If I break the law, I may have to stay in a detention center.</p>	<p>The staff of the detention center supervise me and make sure I am safe.</p>
<p>This police officer may put me in the police car to take me to the police station.</p>	<p>The police car has lights that are bright and a siren that is loud. Police cars are also meant to keep me, the police and the community safe.</p>	<p>Once we get to the police station, the officer will let me out of the police car.</p>	<p>Detention Center: Part 2: Your Arrest</p> <p>When I arrive, I will get things prepared for the staff. It's called intake.</p> <p>What is your name?</p>	<p>Staff may touch my clothes and check my body to make sure I don't have anything that could be unsafe.</p>	<p>This may require removing my clothes.</p>


FOSTER CARE SOCIAL STORY

FOSTER CARE SOCIAL STORY

<p style="font-size: 8px; color: purple;">Foster Care: What is Foster Care?</p> <p style="font-size: 8px;">If my home is unsafe for me, I may have to live in a different home.</p> 	<p style="font-size: 8px;">This home is called a foster care home.</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 8px;">FOSTER CARE HOME</p>	<p style="font-size: 8px;">There will be adults who take care of me and keep me safe in my foster home.</p> 
<p style="font-size: 8px;">They are called foster parents.</p> 	<p style="font-size: 8px;">There may be other children living in my foster home.</p> 	<p style="font-size: 8px;">When I leave my home, I may get to take some of my favourite things to my foster home.</p> 



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#PhillyAutism

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Social Story: Custody Hearing, What to Expect

Social Story: Custody Hearing, What to Expect

<p style="font-size: 8px; color: white;">Custody Hearing: What to Expect</p> <p style="font-size: 8px;">When parents decide not to be married anymore, this is called a divorce.</p> 	<p style="font-size: 8px;">A divorce is not my fault.</p> 	<p style="font-size: 8px;">My parents might be sad or angry.</p> 
<p style="font-size: 8px;">I might feel sad, angry, anxious and confused. It's ok to have these feelings.</p> 	<p style="font-size: 8px;">My parents may not agree on where I should live and how much time I get to spend with each of them. The court will need to decide. This is called a custody hearing.</p> 	<p style="font-size: 8px;">The time I spend with each parent is called "custody".</p> 

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Prepare, Learn, Advise and Notify (PLAN)

When confronted with an emergency, an individual with autism can become overwhelmed and frightened which may cause them to react to the situation in a way others cannot understand.



www.paaautism.org/PLAN



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Be Safe Resources



Prevention Resources

Intervention Resources

paaautism.org/besafe



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Contact Us

 **Kate Hooven** khooven3@gmail.com

 **ASERT Resource Center** info@paautism.org /
877-231-4244 / PAAutism.org



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