



Information Sheet:

What should I do if I suspect my child has autism?

What should I do if I suspect my child may have autism?

If you suspect your child of having autism, talk with the child's pediatrician about your concerns. If concerns are identified, you can start by having your child screened at Responding to Autism in Kennewick to determine the likelihood of autism. Pursuing a medical diagnosis can take 6 months to a year. If the screening determines your child is likely on the autism spectrum, they can begin receiving education, training, services, and support while a medical diagnosis is being pursued.

Autism Screening

Responding to Autism offers autism screenings for children ages 18 months thru adulthood. The goal of the screening is determine whether further evaluation, assessment, and testing is needed to pursue a medical diagnosis. The tools used to screen for autism are designed specifically to detect autism spectrum disorder. A combination of observation, interaction, and screening questionnaires are used by a master level autism specialist to determine the need for further evaluation. A screening report and resources are provided to each family.

How is autism diagnosed?

Presently, there is not a medical test for autism; a diagnosis is based on observed behavior and educational and psychological testing. As the symptoms of autism vary, so do the routes to obtaining a diagnosis.

Once your health provider or autism specialist identifies red flags for an autism spectrum disorder, your child should be referred for a formal assessment (medical diagnosis). You may have to wait some time before you actually go for the assessment, but your family can begin to receive

support and access services at Responding to Autism while you wait.

Whatever age your child is, the assessment should be one that is appropriate for any child with possible developmental concerns, including ASD. Ideally, your child will receive a multi-disciplinary assessment by a team of professionals. The team might include a psychiatrist, a speech and language therapist, a clinical psychologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, and an educational or autism specialist. However, if a multi-disciplinary team is not available and your child is referred to an individual professional that's fine, but it's important that the professional is experienced in diagnosing ASD.

What should I do next?

When a child is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, parents often experience a range of emotions from disbelief and confusion, to sadness and fear, to feeling overwhelmed and even feeling relieved finally knowing what's going on. This is absolutely normal. All parents ask, "What do I do next?" Although there is no simple answer to that question, Responding to Autism is here to help. We have trained autism resource coordinators on staff available to assist you in navigating available programs, support, and resources available to you at Responding to Autism and in the community. To schedule your free consultation contact

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