



TEMPO

NORTH CAROLINA State Society
of Medical Assistants
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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

Newsletter & Alerts

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Presidents Report

I am so happy that I have had the opportunity to be your President for the past year. We have grown in so many different ways and we have been working on some new ideas for the NCSMA that I hope will take place in the next couple of years. I am also very proud of everyone for pitching in with the NCSMA CAN CAN Campaign. This is the inaugural year for this campaign and since April 2017 we have collected a grand total of 907 pounds of nonperishable food items and paper products to help those that are in need. I would LOVE to surpass the 1000 pound mark at our Convention coming up in April. We will be collecting items to donate to the Union County Community Shelter. They are in need of paper towels, bathroom tissue, nonperishable food items, and monetary donations. So whether you can bring 1 item or 100 items, your donation will help more than you know. And don't worry, if you forget to bring your items there will be a piggy bank at the NCSMA Ways and Means table at the Convention to donate money to the Shelter. We as an organization are so fortunate in so many ways and we need to start giving back to our communities more and more.

It has been an honor to be President of such an amazing group of men and women. I really don't want my term to end but it is time to let someone else step up and have their chance to be your leader. One of the reasons I decided to start climbing the ladder to become NCSMA President is so I could reach out and show the younger generation that is involved in our society that they DO have a voice. I know that it can be intimidating to stand up and speak your mind or give your opinion to the members that have been a part of this society for a very long time and sometimes you don't think you are heard or that your opinion doesn't matter. But trust me, IT DOES! We really need for more of the new and younger members to start taking a part in the business side of the NCSMA. Does that mean you have to get up and speak at your first meeting? No. Does that mean you will be elected as an officer at your first meeting? No. We just want you to be able to experience the other side of the NCSMA, in hopes that one day you will want to start learning about all the leadership roles that we have. If it wasn't for the officers, committee chairs, and the chapter presidents, this society wouldn't exist at all and you wouldn't be able to get AAMA CEUs at meetings anywhere in North Carolina. Just think about it.

We want our Yellow Brick Road to last for a really long time because THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE NCSMA!

Rebecca Surratt, CMA (AAMA)



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THE NCSMA CAN CAN

Our society is helping out communities by donating non-perishable items to food banks in the city where our meetings are held. Please bring food and paper products to Summer Seminar, Winter Seminar and Convention meetings. Our goal is 500 pounds of items at each meeting and we need your help! You can drop off the items at the Registration Desk. Lets work together to help others!!!



Officer Reports

President Elect

Hello all!

The office of President-Elect has been going well! I am looking forward to the opportunity to serve NCSMA in other capacities this coming year! If you, or anyone in your chapter, are interested in serving on a committee for the upcoming year, please let me know! Interested members can contact me at aagreer137@nashcc.edu.

See you soon!
Amber Greer, CMA (AAMA)

Vice President

It was a pleasure serving NCSMA in this role. I am very excited and looking forward to the next endeavor. The society keeps growing by the minute. I want to encourage everyone to educate as many people as you can about the importance of certification and renewal. This will make us stronger as a society and profession. It is up to each and everyone to do our part. I want to thank President Surratt, CMA(AAMA) for a great year and everyone for their support.

Maria van de Bovenkamp,
CMA(AAMA)

Vice Speaker

I hope everyone has had a nice winter. My year as Vice Speaker of the House is coming to an end. I have been working along side of Stephanie getting everything ready for Convention. I have attended all meetings this past year. We look forward to a smooth-running House.

Vicki Rummage, CMA
(AAMA)

Vice Speaker of the
House

Secretary/Treasurer

Where has the time gone?? The last two years have flown by! I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as state treasurer. Everything is up-to-date with the books. I have learned so many things and have made so many new friends and memories. I look forward to seeing where things go in the future. Good luck to the next treasurer and I am here to help any time! I look forward to seeing everyone at the 2018 NCSMA State Convention in April.

Chaplain

I would like to thank President Surratt for allowing me to serve as the NCSMA chaplain for the year 2017-2018. It has truly been an honor. It has been a year of losses and sicknesses for so many in our organization. I've tried my best to contact those that need to hear from their NCSMA family with an encouraging word to just know that we care. If you have members on the local level that could use a card to lift their spirits from our state organization, please do not hesitate to let me know. My email is lynnwilliams423@gmail.com.

Lynn Williams, CMA
(AAMA)

Immediate Past President

This is my last report as Immediate Past President. Thank you all for your support through these past years. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on the board. I encourage each of you to seriously consider joining a committee and moving on up to a position on the board. Remember you are responsible to keep this organization flourishing. My love to all.

Paula Cooke, CMA (AAMA)



Committee Reports

Awards Committee

The Awards committee met in Greensboro at winter seminar for judging of submissions. All members either sent in their score sheets or were present for the meeting. We had a lot of submissions this year and am so happy that we had the sample of what to send for judging on the website. My report is in the House of Delegates packet. My thanks to President Surratt for allowing me to serve as chair of this committee. My committee consisted of Elaine Norman, CMA; Lynn Williams, CMA; Debbie Jones, CMA; Maria van de Bo-vencamp, CMA(AAMA); Amy Cothorn, CMA; and Tammy Smith, CMA. Everyone worked hard this year and I appreciate their hard work.

Betty Jones
Active Member
Chair

Budget and Finance Committee

My budget has been submitted to the HOD packet. My committee worked very hard to make changes to the budget that has not had any changes in a number of years. My committee consisted of Jean Harris, CMA; Maria van de Bo-vencamp, CMA; Linda Eaton, CMA; Summer O'Neal, CMA and the Executive Council. I really appreciate all the input that my members had as we did the budget line by line and looked at it. We look forward to the House of Delegates in April.

Betty Jones, Active Member
Chair

Bylaws

I have changed the NCSMA bylaws and will send them to AAMA for approval. I sent each chapter an email regarding the changes. I received several updated chapters bylaws and notified the president of the chapter that their bylaws were in compliance with NCSMA and notified the members of the bylaws committee. I would like to thank Rebecca Surratt, CMA for allowing me to chair this committee this year. Thank you to my committee members.

Dee Dee Edwards, CMA
(AAMA) CPC
Chair

Convention Site

I hope that everyone had a happy Thanksgiving. As of today we have not received any bids for the NCSMA 2020, 21 & 22 State Convention. Please submit your bids to either myself or Becky Keller ASAP, otherwise the state president will pick a chapter to host. If one chapter can not host it alone then you may recruit other chapters to help. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
Tammy E. Smith,
CMA(AAMA)Convention
Site Committee Chairman
Becky Keller,
CMA(AAMA)Convention
Site Committee CoChair

Education Committee

The Education Committee and the Executive Council approved the programs for the NCSMA Convention hosted by the Union County Chapter in Charlotte April 12-15. The following have submitted bids for NCSMA Seminars or Conventions:

NCSMA Convention
2018: Union County
(April 12-15)

Summer Seminar 2018:
Gaston County Chapter
(August 17-19)

Winter Seminar 2019:
Catawba County Chapter

NCSMA Convention
2019: Alamance County
Chapter

Summer Seminar 2019:
Lexington Chapter

Winter Seminar 2020:
OPEN

NCSMA Convention
2020: OPEN

Summer Seminar 2020:
OPEN

If any chapter would like to put in a bid for any of the meetings in 2020, please let me know. My cell number is [336-244-0562](tel:336-244-0562). My email is: jennw62@hotmail.com

Thank you, President Rebecca Surratt, CMA (AAMA) for asking me to serve as Chair of this Committee this past year. My sincere thanks to all of the members of this Committee for their hard work this year!

Jennifer Wiseman, CMA
(AAMA)
Chair
Elaine Norman, CMA
(AAMA)
Co-Chair

Legislative Committee

I do hope everyone has made it through the cold months safely and looking for summer real soon. There have been no issues to come before the Legislation Committee. I want to thank Rebecca Surratt, CMA(AAMA) NCSMA President, for allowing me to serve under her leadership this past year. Looking forward to a new year coming and what it holds for our State.

Marilyn S. Mainwaring,
CMA(AAMA)
Chairman

Long Range Planning Committee

This committee has come up with some new ideas for the NCSMA to start thinking about and planning for. We are hoping these ideas will take effect in the next couple of years and we are hoping it will help us involve a lot of the Medical Assistants that are not members of the AAMA in our state. Stay Tuned!

Rebecca Surratt, CMA
(AAMA)

Committee Reports continued

Membership Committee

NCSMA closed the year strong with over 3,000 members. I know with the holidays people did not renew, but it is not too late. We had over 2100 who did renew on time. Emails to members who had not renewed and to new members. We do have a lot of emails that need updates. If you know of a Medical Assistant or Certified Medical Assistant that has not joined or renewed their membership, then encourage them to join us. Joining the AAMA has great benefits such as: legal counsel that protects your rights to practice, a journal that keeps you abreast of the profession, verification of your certification, enhances your credibility to employers are a few reasons to join. I want to thank the committee for their participation and feedback to improve membership. Also, to President Surratt for her continued support.

Maria van de Bovenkamp, CMA (AAMA), Chair
 Laura Perez, CMA (AAMA)
 Kimberly Conwell, CMA (AAMA)
 Donna Hernandez, CMA (AAMA)
 Lisa Cunningham, CMA (AAMA)

Nominating Committee

I am happy to report that we have a full slate of officers and also delegates and alternates to National. My full report is in the delegates packet.

Paula Cooke, CMA (AAMA)

Online Tempo

I have sent out the Winter online Tempo to all members. If a member did not receive the online Winter Tempo or this Spring Tempo please email me their email address at deedee.edwards@gmail.com and I will add them to the list. Deadline for Summer Tempo

Public Relations and Publicity

It is my pleasure to report that we now have banners! These will be most useful at our publicity meetings. The rest of my report is in the delegates packet.

Paula Cooke, CMA (AAMA)

Ways and Means

The Surry County Chapter of AAMA would like to invite you to come by the NCSMA table at the convention in April to check out the items available for purchase. This will be the last time that NCSMA members will be able to purchase President Rebecca Surratt, CMA (AAMA) T-shirts with her Wizard of Oz them. Come check them out!!

Linda Eaton, CMA (AAMA) CPC

Website Committee

After the Convention in April, I plan on moving some things around on the website to keep it looking fresh. I will also be adding a lot more pictures and getting it ready to submit to the AAMA for the Excel Award for Website Development. If you have any ideas as to what would make the website look more fresh and up to date please email me at www.ncsma.org

Rebecca Surratt, CMA (AAMA)



Continuing
Education

2018 NCSMA Convention

April 12-15, 2018
 Renaissance Hotel
 Charlotte, NC

AAMA National Conference

Sept 14—17, 2018
 Hilton Salt Lake City Center
 Registration form on
www.aama-ntl.org website.

2018 Summer Seminar

August 17-19
 Gastonia, NC
 Comfort Inn and Suites - Gastonia, NC. Gaston College-Belmont Campus. more details to come



KEEP
LEARNING
AND
STAY
INFORMED

Chapter Reports

Abemarle Area Chapter

Greetings! Our Chapter have installed our new officers for the 2018-2019 year. I am the new president and would like to thank everyone in our Chapter for their continued help and support. You all are awesome. We, the new officers, are looking forward to working together to make our Chapter a larger one with new members and great ideas.

We would like to thank the Greensboro Chapter for the outstanding performance they made on the Winter Seminar. The informative speakers, vendors, and great gifts were all awesome. The CEUs that were obtained were fantastic also.

We gave donations to various organizations such as:

Salvation Army

Hope Line

American Red Cross

Day Break

Pregnancy Crisis Center

During Medical Assistant Week, our members went to the Medical Assistant Class. They spoke to the students about the profession and gave them an appreciation gift.

Our Chapter continues to have our monthly meetings. They are held every 1st Thursday of each month. They are located behind the YMCA in the Owens Building, room 117 at 7:00pm. We would like to invite all Medical Assistants in the area to come out and join us. Here you will receive valuable information, obtain CEUs, and have lots of fun.

See you all in April 2018 at the NCSMA Convention in Charlotte, NC!

Betty Lilly, CMA(AAMA)
President

Burke Chapter

Hello to all from Burke County! Our chapter continues to flourish with CEU approved monthly meetings, new members, student members and record numbers in attendance. We installed our new officers on January 9. We have agreed for 2018 to sponsor and volunteer at the Good Samaritan Clinic. Our guest speaker for March will be sharing more information on how to assist the uninsured in our county and volunteer at the GSC. The chapter is making plans to sponsor an all-day Seminar in September with more information to come. We are excited about this event, as it will enable us to increase the treasure giving opportunities for more student scholarships and meeting needs of the community. We meet on the second Tuesday of each month at Blue Ridge Healthcare Morganston Campus Table Rock conference room 6:00pm. We hope to see you there!

Vicki Shuping, CMA
(AAMA), CMPM
President

Catawba County Chapter

Hi everyone! I'm both pleased and excited to begin as the new president of the Catawba County Chapter this year. It's all about teamwork, so let me begin by officially thanking my officers for their dedication and hard work thus far-they are very appreciated!

Looking forward, we are planning an exciting year and are already working diligently to get everything organized for the 2019 NCSMA Winter Seminar. This will take place January 18-20, 2019 at Crowne Plaza Hickory, so save the date! If you wish to support this worthwhile event while showcasing your practice or company to attendees from all over NC, please contact me about a sponsorship opportunity. A limited number of opportunities will be available until May 15, 2018.

Finally, our approved CEU meetings take place at Frye Regional Medical Center on the 4th Tuesday of each month. If you currently are not attending a meeting and would like to meet friends new and old and get your CEUs, please join us there at 6:30 PM.

Please email me at angela.huffman@emergeortho.com for further details.

I am looking forward to the state convention in April and to see so many smiling faces!

Angela Huffman, CMA
(AAMA)
President, Catawba County Chapter

Forsyth-Stokes-Davie

Our new officers were installed in December 2017. In January, our Chapter presented a scholarship to Elizabeth Wren 2nd year student at Forsyth Technical Community College. We had 4 members attend the Winter Seminar in Greensboro. Our Chapter continues to have AAMA approved CEU's each month at North Point Grill Winston-Salem, NC. F-S-D averages about 20 in attendance at each meeting.

Beth Paulin, CMA
(AAMA)
President

Chapter Reports Continued

Gaston County Chapter

Greetings from the Gaston County Chapter of Medical Assistants. We have already had a very busy year in preparation for the 2018 NCSMA Summer Seminar. The dates are August 17 - 20 at the Belmont Campus of Gaston College. The Hotel is Comfort Suites in Gastonia. We have 6 CEU's scheduled. We look forward to seeing everyone.

We meet every 3rd Tuesday of the month at 700 pm at Carolina Orthopedics in Gastonia. Our chapter is currently collecting Chicken Noodle Soup and Gatorade for Chemo Therapy patients as our Community Service Project. We will soon be awarding a scholarship to a deserving Gaston College MA student and will be attending the Pinning Ceremony in May where we will present roses to the candidates.

We look forward to seeing everyone in April at the 2018 NCSMA State Convention..

Tammy E. Smith, CMA (AAMA)
Vice President /Program Chairman
Gaston County Chapter of Medical Assistants

Greensboro Chapter

I was so thrilled to see how many people came out to participate in 2018 Winter Seminar, in spite of the weather a few days earlier !! I would like to say thank you to all the ladies in the Greensboro Chapter who helped make seminar a success !! I loved all the creativity we showed in our presentation this year for seminar. I thought all the handmade creations were great but, that yellow brick road was superb, thank you Lisa Wilson CMA (AAMA) for your wonder-

ful talent !!! I am blessed to be able to call these ladies my friends as well as my sisters!!!! I am proud to say that we had 148 attendees at seminar, out of that 3 were students. Our vendors were a big hit !!! I even got a moment to visit our vendors and bought a pair of sparkly earrings, lol !!!!

Greensboro Chapter continues to have approved CEU's at most of our monthly chapter meetings. In September 2017 our chapter worked on our Community Street Cleaning Project. Our chapter had a great Christmas Party at Mimi's Cafe 12/2017 as Lynn Williams, CMA (AAMA) installed our officers. We have had a few new members join Greensboro Chapter in 2017.

I am excited to see everyone at 2018 State Convention April 12-15th. I always enjoy seeing my CMA family at these events, catching up with friends and making new friends. Being a CMA (AAMA) is number 1 !!!!!!! See you all soon !!!!

Carol Fiato, CMA
(AAMA)

Greensboro Chapter
President

Haywood Chapter

The chapter met late in January due to the weather. We also had a great meeting in February and hosted a group

on February 27 to hear Don. We are making plans for a spring one day seminar on May 5, this will be all Administrative topics. Another one day the first Saturday in October. We will post to the NCSMA website.

We honored Gail Green memory by naming an award for her. The Gail Green membership Award. This award will be given in December to a member who attends 8 of our 12 meetings. We will draw a name and pay their membership dues for the next year. We are excited about this new award in Gail's memory. Gail was our chapter's life member. Hope everyone has a great spring, see you in April.

Shirley Sawyer, CMA
(AAMA), CPC
President

High Point Chapter

The High Point Chapter meets the 2nd Monday of each month. We have approved CEU speakers, so everyone who attends will receive a free CEU. We are working on ways to increase our attendance. We are looking forward to seeing everyone at the state convention this April.

Thank you,
Summer O'Neal, CMA
(AAMA)
President



Chapter Reports Continued

Lexington Chapter

Hello from the Lexington Chapter! We still meet the 2nd Tuesday of every month in the Wellness Center at Lexington Medical Center and our attendance has continued to grow. Our chapter helped with several community services in 2017. We served a meal at the local homeless shelter, adopted two children for Christmas, and provided a monetary donation to the Davidson County Hospice for various snack items to be used by families visiting their loved ones. I have enjoyed being President of the chapter thus far and I am excited for potential community service projects for 2018.

Ashley Thompson, CMA
(AAMA) President

Nash/Edgecombe Chapter

Greetings,
In February we had 9 members in attendance.
That was very exciting!!! Our speaker for the month was a retired RN/Lactation Consultant on Breast Feeding as it relates to the whole family and community. We continue to have great speakers and look forward to sharing this information as we serve our community. We are taking up donations of Baby Lotion, Bath Wash, Baby Crème, etc and giving them to a non-profit organization Your Choice Resource Pregnancy Care Center of Rocky Mount, NC that assists women, men, and children in a crisis situation. This organization has been in our area for 28 years serving the community. Hope to see you at the NCSMA Convention in Charlotte.
Joyfully Yours,
Delphine H. Martin, CMA
(AAMA)

Pitt County Chapter

The Pitt County Chapter is set and ready for this year! We look forward to seeing everyone at the NCSMA State Convention in April. Look for our President, Amber Greer, to hopefully be elected as the new NCSMA State President at the annual House of Delegates!

Amber Greer, CMA (AAMA)

Surry County Chapter

From the foothills of North Carolina, hello from Surry County. Our Chapter is having a great year so far! We continue to have CEU approved meetings each month and we're working to grow our chapter with younger, new faces. We had 8 students attend our Scope of Practice presentation by Don Balasa. They were interested in what was being said and brought up questions. They were a breath of fresh air to our usual group. We typically meet on the second Tuesday of the month, either in Elkin (at Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital) or Mount Airy (at Foothills Primary Care), at 7:00 PM.

We are excited to have chosen as our community service for this year - the Surry Yadkin Childrens' Center. This is a Childrens' Home that has two locations; one in Surry County and one in Yadkin County. This idea was brought to us by MASO (Medical Assisting Student Organization) of Surry Community College. They were in the process of fundraising to purchase a defibril-

lator, for one of the homes, and our chapter had the desire to also support this great cause. We realize we are a blessed chapter and wanted to find an impactful way to represent the counties that support this chapter.

Our theme for this year is "Teamwork" and our chapter is really stepping up in this respect. We have lots of new faces serving in new roles. They are being mentored by previous committee members and officers, who graciously offer support and guidance, when needed.

Allison Reeves, CMA (AAMA)
President

Union County Chapter

Hello NCSMA,
Hope everyone is ready for Spring. The Chapter had five in attend for Winter Seminar. Congratulations ladies on a great, well planned, educational Seminar. The first bi-monthly Chapter meeting was presented by Meredith Austin CMA on Updates in Billing, Coding, and Health Insurance. Very interesting and informative. Fourteen members braved the chilly night to be there and earn their CEUs. The Chapter is working to finalize and tie up the loose ends to host the NCSMA Convention at the Renaissance Suites Hotel, Charlotte NC, April 12 -15, 2018. We look forward to seeing you. Please check the NCSMA website for your registration form.

Patricia W. Clark, CMA
(AAMA)
President

What is autism spectrum disorder?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) refers to a group of complex neurodevelopment disorders characterized by repetitive and characteristic patterns of behavior and difficulties with social communication and interaction. The symptoms are present from early childhood and affect daily functioning. The term “spectrum” refers to the wide range of symptoms, skills, and levels of disability in functioning that can occur in people with ASD. Some children and adults with ASD are fully able to perform all activities of daily living while others require substantial support to perform basic activities. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5, published in 2013) includes Asperger syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, and pervasive developmental disorders not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) as part of ASD rather than as separate disorders. A diagnosis of ASD includes an assessment of intellectual disability and language impairment.

ASD occurs in every racial and ethnic group, and across all socioeconomic levels. However, boys are significantly more likely to develop ASD than girls. The latest analysis from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 1 in 68 children has ASD.

What are some common signs of ASD?

Even as infants, children with ASD may seem different, especially when compared to other children their own age. They may become overly focused on certain objects, rarely make eye contact, and fail to engage in typical babbling with their parents. In other cases, children may develop normally until the second or even third year of life, but then start to withdraw and become indifferent to social engagement.

The severity of ASD can vary greatly and is based on the degree to which social communication, insistence of sameness of activities and surroundings, and repetitive patterns of behavior affect the daily functioning of the individual.

Social impairment and communication difficulties

Many people with ASD find social interactions difficult. The mutual give-and-take nature of typical communication and interaction is often particularly challenging. Children with ASD may fail to respond to their names, avoid eye contact with other people, and only interact with others to achieve specific goals. Often children with ASD do not understand how to play or engage with other children and may prefer to be alone. People with ASD may find it difficult to understand other people’s feelings or talk about their own feelings.

People with ASD may have very different verbal abilities ranging from no speech at all to speech that is fluent, but awkward and inappropriate. Some children with ASD may have delayed speech and language skills, may repeat phrases, and give unrelated answers to questions. In addition, people with ASD can have a hard time using and understanding non-verbal cues such as gestures, body language, or tone of voice. For example, young children with ASD might not understand what it means to wave goodbye. People with ASD may also speak in flat, robot-like or a sing-song voice about a narrow range of favorite topics, with little regard for the interests of the person to whom they are speaking.

Repetitive and characteristic behaviors

Many children with ASD engage in repetitive movements or unusual behaviors such as flapping their arms, rocking from side to side, or twirling. They may become preoccupied with parts of objects like the wheels on a toy truck. Children may also become obsessively interested in a particular topic such as airplanes or memorizing train schedules. Many people with ASD seem to thrive so much on routine that changes to the daily patterns of life — like an unexpected stop on the way home from school — can be very challenging. Some children may even get angry or have emotional outbursts, especially when placed in a new or overly stimulating environment.

What disorders are related to ASD?

Certain known genetic disorders are associated with an increased risk for autism, including Fragile X syndrome (which causes intellectual disability) and tuberous sclerosis (which causes benign tumors to grow in the brain and other vital organs) — each of which results from a mutation in a single, but different, gene. Recently, researchers have discovered other genetic mutations in children diagnosed with autism, including some that have not yet been designated as named syndromes. While each of these disorders is rare, in aggregate, they may account for 20 percent or more of all autism cases.

People with ASD also have a higher than average risk of having epilepsy. Children whose language skills regress early in life — before age 3 — appear to have a risk of developing epilepsy or seizure-like brain activity. About 20 to 30 percent of children with ASD develop epilepsy by the time they reach adulthood. Additionally, people with both ASD and intellectual disability have the greatest risk of developing seizure disorder.

How is ASD diagnosed?

ASD symptoms can vary greatly from person to person depending on the severity of the disorder. Symptoms may even go unrecognized for young children who have mild ASD or less debilitating handicaps. Very early indicators that require evaluation by an expert include:

- no babbling or pointing by age 1
- no single words by age 16 months or two-word phrases by age 2
- no response to name
- loss of language or social skills previously acquired
- poor eye contact
- excessive lining up of toys or objects
- no smiling or social responsiveness
- impaired ability to initiate or sustain a conversation with others
- absence or impairment of imaginative and social play
- repetitive or unusual use of language
- abnormally intense or focused interest
- preoccupation with certain objects or subjects
- inflexible adherence to specific routines or rituals

Continued on next page.

Later indicators include:

- impaired ability to make friends with peers
- impaired ability to initiate or sustain a conversation with others
- absence or impairment of imaginative and social play
- repetitive or unusual use of language
- abnormally intense or focused interest
- preoccupation with certain objects or subjects
- inflexible adherence to specific routines or rituals

Health care providers will often use a questionnaire or other screening instrument to gather information about a child's development and behavior. Some screening instruments rely solely on parent observations, while others rely on a combination of parent and doctor observations. If screening instruments indicate the possibility of ASD, a more comprehensive evaluation is usually indicated. A comprehensive evaluation requires a multidisciplinary team, including a psychologist, neurologist, psychiatrist, speech therapist, and other professionals who diagnose and treat children with ASD. The team members will conduct a thorough neurological assessment and in-depth cognitive and language testing. Because hearing problems can cause behaviors that could be mistaken for ASD, children with delayed speech development should also have their hearing tested.

What causes ASD?

Scientists believe that both genetics and environment likely play a role in ASD. There is great concern that rates of autism have been increasing in recent decades without full explanation as to why. Researchers have identified a number of genes associated with the disorder. Imaging studies of people with ASD have found differences in the development of several regions of the brain. Studies suggest that ASD could be a result of disruptions in normal brain growth very early in development. These disruptions may be the result of defects in genes that control brain development and regulate how brain cells communicate with each other. Autism is more common in children born prematurely. Environmental factors may also play a role in gene function and development, but no specific environmental causes have yet been identified. The theory that parental practices are responsible for ASD has long been disproved. Multiple studies have shown that vaccination to prevent childhood infectious diseases does not increase the risk of autism in the population.

How is autism treated?

There is no cure for ASD. Therapies and behavioral interventions are designed to remedy specific symptoms and can substantially improve those symptoms. The ideal treatment plan coordinates therapies and interventions that meet the specific needs of the individual. Most health care professionals agree that the earlier the intervention, the better.

Educational/behavioral interventions: Early behavioral/educational interventions have been very successful in many children with ASD. In these interventions therapists use highly structured and intensive skill-oriented training sessions to help children develop social and language skills, such as applied behavioral analysis, which encourages positive behaviors and discourages negative ones. In addition, family counseling for the parents and siblings of children with ASD often helps families cope with the particular challenges of living with a child with ASD.

Medications: While medication can't cure ASD or even treat its main symptoms, there are some that can help with related symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Antipsychotic medications are used to treat severe behavioral problems. Seizures can be treated with one or more anticonvulsant drugs. Medication used to treat people with attention deficit disorder can be used effectively to help decrease impulsivity and hyperactivity in people with ASD. Parents, caregivers, and people with autism should use caution before adopting any unproven treatments.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on neurological disorders or research programs funded by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke:

Information also is available from the following organizations:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333
inquiry@cdc.gov
<https://www.cdc.gov/>
Tel: 800-311-3435; 404-639-3311; 404-639-3543

Resource: <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Fact-Sheets/Autism-Spectrum-Disorder-Fact-Sheet>