

April is Autism Acceptance Month



In 1970, the Autism Society launched an ongoing nationwide effort to promote autism awareness and assure that all affected by autism are able to achieve the highest quality of life possible. In 1972, the Autism Society launched the first annual [National Autistic Children's week](#), which evolved into Autism Acceptance Month (AAM) every April. This is a time to embrace neurodiversity and inclusivity for those on the autism spectrum and to help connect them to services that meet their needs. Additionally, identifying young children who meet criteria for autism is essential so that they can receive evidence-based treatment as soon as possible. The AAP has now added social emotional milestones in family friendly language that can help identify children with delays in areas that may relate to autism spectrum disorder. Milestones such as "smiling on her own to get your attention" at four months, "shows several facial expressions" at 9 months, "shows you what she can do by saying "look at me!" by 30 months, and "sings and dances for you" at 5 years are included. As we emerge from the pandemic, we know that families with children on the autism spectrum have endured enormous challenges,

including reductions in services and isolation. Many children missed well child checks and did not have the typical safety nets like early intervention during the pandemic. PCPs are now seeing children who would have been referred for questions of autism earlier had it not been for these challenges. Additionally, children may be presenting with social delays due to lack of typical social contact with extended family, daycare, and preschool. These factors have led to increased referral rates and wait times for evaluations. Baystate Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics (pictured are **Dr. Quynh Wells Ph.D.**; **Dr. Shannon Kay Ph.D., BCBA-D, Chief of Developmental Behavioral Peds**; and **Brenda Gardner MA, BCBA**) is committed to evaluating young children at risk for autism and recommending evidence-based treatment. If you have questions about whether concerns warrant referral to us or to community resources such as the schools, please feel free to contact us. We can work together as a community to ensure that high risk children get to the services they need as soon as possible.