

WASHINGTON STATE MEDICAL HOME PARTNERSHIPS PROJECT

Child Health Notes - March 2021

Promoting early identification and partnerships between families, primary health care providers & the community.

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Serving Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Primary Care



Data from the National Survey of Children's Health from 2018-2019 indicate that 2.6% of children aged 3-17 years in WA State currently have autism spectrum disorder (ASD). As a primary care provider, there is a high likelihood that you have children with a diagnosis of ASD or children who will be diagnosed with ASD in the patient population that you serve.

The need for ASD diagnosis has outgrown the capacity for specialty centers to address the demand. There are long waitlists for diagnostic evaluations at specialty centers in Washington state and throughout the United States. The disruptions to the healthcare system from the COVID-19 pandemic has made this gap much worse.

The autism Centers of Excellence (COE) program has been developed in Washington State as a strategy to address the growing need for ASD diagnosis, especially for children with Medicaid. COEs can offer a patient and family centered solution to meet the needs of diagnostic evaluations for children in their communities. They also can become an important local resource for children with ASD.

What is an Autism Center of Excellence (COE)?

An autism Center of Excellence (COE) is any individual health care provider, medical practice, psychology practice, or multidisciplinary assessment team, that has completed the COE Certification training authorized by the WA State Health Care Authority (HCA). Physicians, ARNPs and pediatric primary care naturopaths are eligible to become COEs. A recognized COE must conduct a comprehensive evaluation with multidisciplinary input and develop the multidisciplinary clinical treatment plan, including prescribing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy if appropriate, for Medicaid eligible children. Additionally, the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) will accept autism diagnoses from COEs as a component of DDA services eligibility.*

* DDA does not accept a diagnosis of autism from naturopathic physicians for the purpose of eligibility.

How to Find a COE in Your Community

You can refer patients in your practice to a COE for an ASD evaluation if there is one available in your county who is accepting outside patients. The HCA maintains a [list](#) of COEs throughout WA state. Look for your county on the list to see whether there are COEs locally.

How to Better Support Children and Youth with ASD in Your Practice

You can earn up to 6.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits, 6.5 NAPNAP contact hours, and 6 MOC Part 2 credits for free and learn more about ASD and ways to support the patients with ASD in your practice through an online course by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) for pediatric clinicians entitled "[Identifying and Caring for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Course for Pediatric Clinicians](#)" which will be offered at no cost until 4/19/2023. You can create an AAP account as part of registering for the free course.

The online course provides practical tips and guidance for working with patients who have ASD including utilizing visual supports such as pictures and stories that offer a preview of what will happen, developing preparatory materials such as photos of staff and office setting and typical visit schedule, setting up your office/practice so it is inclusive of the needs of families and children with ASD (i.e. quiet area for families to wait, dimming the lights), using simple language, reducing frequency of vital sign measurement and/or changing the sequence/flow of an appointment (i.e. get vitals at end).

Key Information to Identify for Referral After a Positive ASD Screen (or When There Is Clinical Concern)

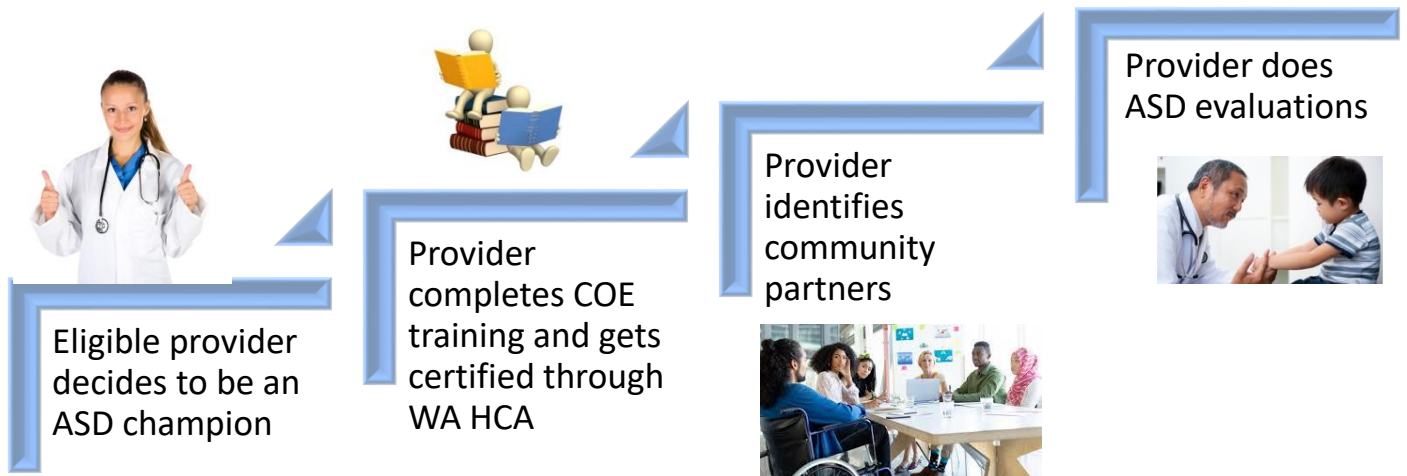
General Tips:

- ❖ Obtain hearing test and vision screening/test records and include them in your referral.
- ❖ Send a copy of your positive screening tool (i.e. M-CHAT-R/F)
- ❖ Obtain testing records from early intervention services or schools. Progress notes and goals are sometimes sent in lieu of, or in addition to, testing records.
 - Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) (birth to 2 years 11 months)
 - Common tests used are Developmental Assessment of Young Children Second Edition (DAYC-2) and the Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development (BSID).
 - Individualized Education Program (IEP) (3-21 years)
 - School evaluations may include use of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), Adaptive Behavior Assessment System (ABAS), or Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS).
 - Take note of IQ scores to include in your referral for ASD evaluation. An IQ score of 69 or lower indicates an intellectual disability.

Consider Becoming an Autism Center of Excellence (COE)

If you are a physician, ARNP, or naturopath in primary care and work with the pediatric population, you are eligible to become a COE. Becoming designated as a COE can link you to a network of support and will provide an opening for other enriching opportunities. Providers who become COEs and who see patients on Medicaid are eligible to participate in [Project ECHO](#) (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) Autism WA. COEs can also collaborate with local community partners to establish an interdisciplinary [School Medical Autism Review Team](#) (SMART) in your county, with support provided by the WA State Medical Home Partnerships Project. The following graphic lays out the steps to becoming a COE.

How to Become an Autism Center of Excellence (COE)



SPECIAL NEEDS INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Regional:	WA State Medical Home Partnerships Project - Center of Excellence (COE) information	https://medicalhome.org/stateinitiatives/centers-of-excellence/ (general info) https://medicalhome.org/coe (COE trainings)
	Autism Spectrum Disorder – An Overview, Child Health Note	https://medicalhome.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/asd-chn-state-version.pdf
	UW Readilab - Conveying Concerns About Autism to Parents	https://uwreadilab.com/discussing-concerns-autism-suggestions-parents/
	Responding to Parents’ Concerns About Autism	https://uwreadilab.com/responding-parents-concerns-autism/
	WA State Health Care Authority Autism and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy	https://www.hca.wa.gov/billers-providers-partners/programs-and-services/autism-and-applied-behavior-analysis-aba-therapy
WithinReach Family Health Hotline	1-800-322-2588, 1-800-833-6388 TTD http://www.parenthelp123.org/ Spanish: http://www.parenthelp123.org/es/	
National:	AAP Identification, Evaluation, and Management of Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder	https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/145/1/e20193447.full.pdf
	Hands in Autism® Interdisciplinary Training and Resource Center	https://handsinautism.iupui.edu/tools-resources/for-medical-professionals/
	Tools & Resources for Medical Professionals	
	A.J. Drexel Autism Institute National Autism Indicators Report	https://drexel.edu/~media/Files/autismoutcomes/publications/NAIR%20Health%202020.ashx
	Healthychildren.org If Autism is Suspected, What’s Next?	https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/Autism/Pages/If-Autism-is-Suspected-Whats-Next.aspx
	Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia - Primary Care Clinical Pathway for Autism Screening and Referral	https://www.chop.edu/clinical-pathway/autism-screening-and-referral-clinical-pathway
	Blood Draws: A Provider's Guide from Autism Intervention Research Network on Physical Health (AIR-P)	https://airpnetwork.org/what-we-do/toolkits/2017/58/blood-draws-providers-guide

This Child Health Note is available online at <https://medicalhome.org/topics/child-health-notes-topics/>