

Parents, family members, and caregivers are usually the first to notice the delay of developmental milestones of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Despite stereotyped behaviors, some high functioning individuals with ASD can go undiagnosed until later in life when the demands of school or work reveal skill deficits.

If you suspect your child may have autism, the first step is talking to your family doctor. Although they can't make the diagnosis themselves, they can connect you with a specialist that can refer you to the British Columbia Autism Assessment Network (BCAAN) for assessment. If your family doctor does not feel you have a reason to be concerned, or you feel not listened to, try listing your concerns in writing and providing supporting documents from teachers, Speech-Language Pathologists, or an Infant Development Program Consultant. You might consider getting a second opinion from another family physician too. Research shows that early identification leads to optimal outcomes.

How is ASD diagnosed?

An ASD diagnosis depends on the number and pattern of typical characteristics, and the observation of specific behaviours and disabilities. It takes a multidisciplinary team of qualified autism specialists to make a clinical diagnosis. The team typically includes: a pediatrician, a registered psychologist, a psychiatrist, and a speech-language pathologist. Many different measures and screening tools such as the DSM-V and the M-CHAT-R are used in the process to ensure accuracy.

Waiting list times for BCAAN's publicly funded teams vary from region to region and time of year. Priority is given to children under six, and waiting times can vary from three months to one year.

Private Assessments

Depending on wait times in your region a private assessments may be an option to consider. It is important to make sure the assessment meets the criteria set out in the Standards and Guidelines for the Assessment and Diagnosis of Young Children with ASD in BC. Ministry of Children and Family Development require specific assessment information to access their service and Autism Funding, please contact BC Autism Assessment Network (BCAAN) <http://www.phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/bc-autism-assessment-network> for details in private assessment. Some extended medical plans cover psychologists services, please check with your provider.

Talk To Us

Have a question? Looking for further information? Our friendly and knowledgeable Information Officers provide personalized support through email, phone, and in-person.

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