



This document serves to help educators better understand **autism spectrum disorder (ASD)** by increasing the capacity for understanding similarities and differences between educational eligibility and medical diagnosis. This resource provides guidance for Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams, administrators, educators, and practitioners.

## WHAT IS ASD?

ASD is a lifelong developmental disability that includes autism spectrum disorder and other pervasive developmental disorders, as described in the current version of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. ASD is generally evident before three years of age and significantly affects verbal, nonverbal, or pragmatic communication and social interaction skills, which may result in an adverse effect on the student's educational performance. ([Section 511 Indiana Administrative Code \(IAC\) 7-41-1](#))

The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) provides standardized criteria to help diagnose ASD. Whereas Aspergers was included in the definition of ASD in Article 7 of the Indiana Administrative Code, the DSM-5 no longer makes this inclusion and updates will be coming on this definition in Article 7. Click [here](#) for a detailed description of ASD from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS & EDUCATIONAL ELIGIBILITY

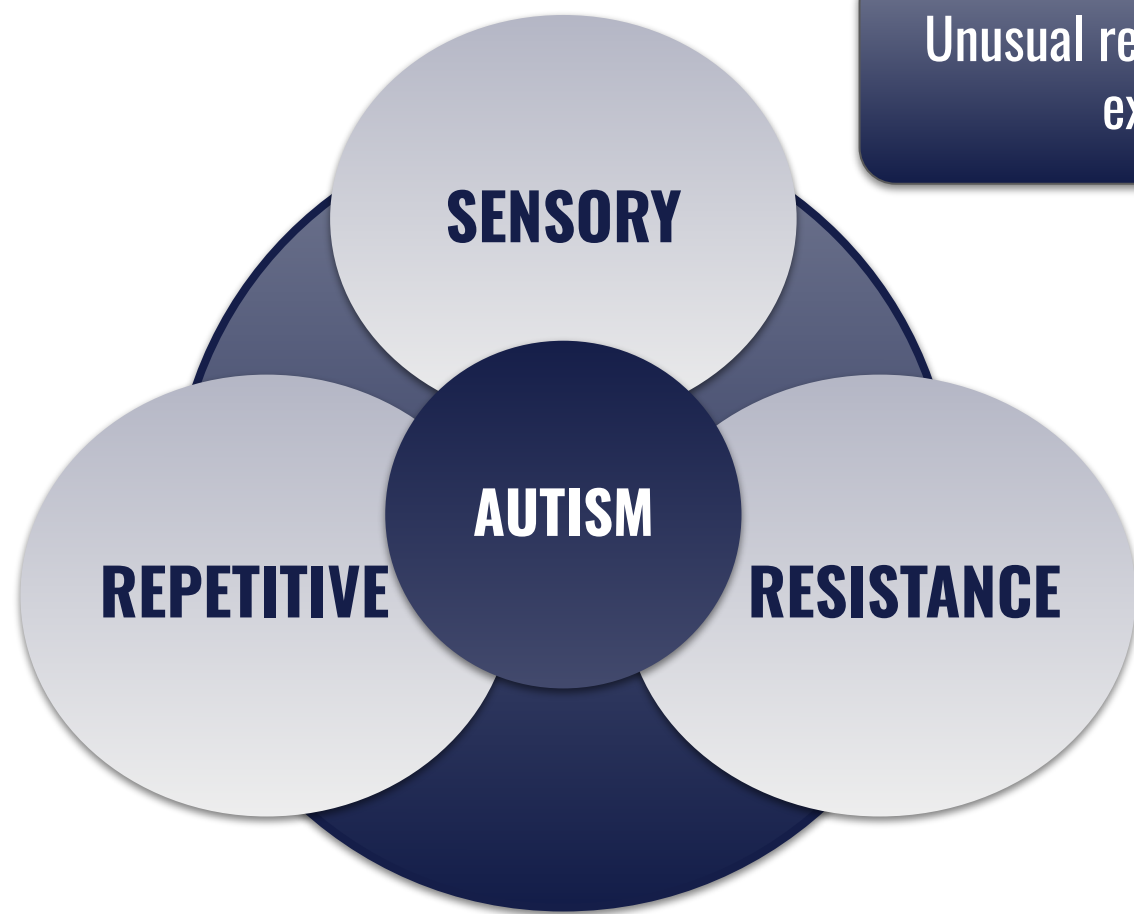
A medical diagnosis is given by a doctor for the purpose of explaining symptoms and signs. It is used to diagnose a disease, condition, or disorder through physical examination, lab tests, or psychological evaluation. A medical diagnosis from a physician does not necessarily mean a child will qualify for special education and related services. Because educational eligibility does not rely on a medical diagnosis, schools must conduct an educational assessment by school psychologists and other school professionals before determining if the child meets eligibility criteria for receiving services under ASD.

Educational eligibility is decided by the case conference committee (CCC), which is comprised of various school staff, the student's parents, and the student. The CCC considers information provided by the multidisciplinary team, which is a group of qualified professionals who conduct the educational evaluation. The primary focus in determining educational eligibility is the impact ASD has on the student's learning.



# SPREAD THE WORD AUTISM DIAGNOSIS: EDUCATIONAL VS. MEDICAL

“ASD is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain. People with ASD often have problems with social communication and interaction, and restricted or repetitive behaviors or interests. People with ASD may also have different ways of learning, moving, or paying attention” (CDC, 2022).



Unusual responses to sensory experiences

Resistance to environmental or schedule changes

Engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movement

The CDC estimates that about one in 36 eight-year-old children were identified with ASD in 2020, or roughly 2.3%.

- Boys were four times as likely to be identified with ASD than girls.

ASD occurs among all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.







After a parent has provided consent, as defined in 511 IAC 7-32-17, for an initial educational evaluation, the public agency must conduct a comprehensive and individual educational evaluation in accordance with the requirements of this rule and 511 IAC 7-41. The educational evaluation must be conducted by a multidisciplinary team that prepares an educational evaluation report addressing the necessary components of evaluation specific to each suspected disability set forth in 511 IAC 7-41.

## ASD ELIGIBILITY EVIDENCE EXAMPLES

1

Current academic achievement

2

Functional skills or adaptive behavior across various environments from multiple sources

3

Student's receptive, expressive, pragmatic, and social communication skills and strategies

4

Social and developmental history

5

Systematic observation of the student across various environments





**IF EDUCATIONAL ELIGIBILITY CANNOT BE ESTABLISHED, WHAT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?**

“Autism is not applicable in an educational eligibility if the student’s educational performance is adversely affected by a. emotional disability, b. blindness or low vision, c. deaf-blind, d. intellectual disability unless the characteristics of ASD are demonstrated to a greater degree than is normally attributed to these disabilities.” 511 IAC 7-41-1

IEP	Section 504 Plan
Originates from the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)	Originates from Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Students must be found eligible from one of thirteen disabilities that interferes with the child’s ability to learn in the general education classroom.	Students must have any disability that interferes with the child’s ability to learn in a general education classroom.
An IEP is required to include key items of the child’s learning goals, describes services in finite detail and is detailed in assessment participation.	A Section 504 Plan is less detailed. Accommodations and supports are included, along with the designated service provider.

A Section 504 Plan could be considered by the CCC where the student does not qualify for an IEP.