

VIRGINIA
INFANT & TODDLER SPECIALIST

N E T W O R K

“Achieving Excellence in Early Care”

www.va-itsnetwork.org

Autism Awareness

Autism is a developmental disorder that affects communication and behavior. One in 54 children have autism with males being four times more likely to be diagnosed than females. Autism is a complex, lifelong disorder affecting how young children:

- form and maintain relationships,
- communicate intentions, emotions, ideas and feelings,
- calm down and engage, and
- respond socially to interactions and situations.



Diagnosing autism can be a long and difficult process. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all children are screened for autism at 18-24 months of age and, again, at 30 months by the child’s pediatrician.

What are some behaviors to watch for?

Autism impacts each child differently but here are some common behaviors:

- Do not smile
- Have little to no eye contact
- Do not point to objects to get other’s attention, or do not follow a moving toy with their eyes
- Do not respond to their names or do not use words to indicate needs
- Will echo/mimic words they do not understand
- Prefer to be alone/do not initiate play
- Line up toys, pay attention only to parts of a toy or not use a toy for what it was intended
- Display repetitive behaviors such as hand-flapping, rocking, jumping, and twirling
- Smell food, refuse certain textures, or have a limited diet
- Have sensitivity to touch, light, and sound and may exhibit difficulties with naptime

How can I support a child in my program who may have autism?

1. Respect and recognize that all children learn and process information differently. Do not attempt to diagnose a child.
2. Learn the signs and symptoms of autism and what you can do to help young children with autism.
3. Maintain open, honest, and frequent communication with families by gathering important information such as: what does the child like to eat, how does the child fall asleep, what things upset the child, what things the child enjoys, what calms the child down, what services the child is receiving and what kind, what medication the child takes and how it impacts the child's behavior, and how to gain the child's attention.
4. Prepare your space and instruction to be inclusive for children with autism. Creating a quiet space to calm down or safe place to express sensory needs is beneficial and necessary for children with autism. Use engagement techniques, social stories, visual schedules, modeling, consistent routines and interactions, prompting, simple, clear instructions, and break down tasks in manageable small steps.
5. Lastly, be knowledgeable of community resources to share with families.

What resources are available to help families?

- The pediatrician can conduct a screening for autism
- The family's local Infant and Toddler Connection can conduct a free developmental assessment of a child under 36 months of age and provide speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, developmental services and service coordination
- The Child Find Committee of the child's local elementary school can conduct a free developmental assessment of a child two-and-half or older and provide educational and therapy services
- Infant and Toddler Mental Health consultants develop individualized service plans to help the child maintain placement and maximize social emotional learning experiences in child care and assist the family in accessing community resources

For information to share with parents, visit the online resources below.

[Easterseals Autism Services for Young Children](#)

[Autism Speaks-A Parent's Guide to Autism](#)

[National Autism Center-Autism Resources for Families](#)

[Click here to request on-site services online now!](#)





Resource Spotlight:

Center for Inclusive Child Care has a wonderful resource library with materials for child care professionals including info modules, tip sheets, documents, helpful URLs, and self-study courses. **Resources** can be sorted by topic, including autism, inclusion, and child development.



Looking for ways to play with little ones? **Pathways** has developed an online **Baby Games Calendar**. Activities, milestones, and games can be searched using the child's date of birth.

Upcoming PD Opportunities

The VA ITSN website maintains a list of upcoming virtual trainings. We would love to have you participate in one of our trainings. Check out the link [here](#) to register directly.

Keep Educating Yourself



Promoting Diversity in the Infant and Toddler Environment

This webinar will discuss the significance of diversity and its contribution to the overall development of infants and toddlers. Participants will learn strategies to intentionally select materials, prepare displays, and create activities that celebrate diversity. The Infant/Toddler and Family Child Care Environment Rating Scales will be referenced.

**April 15, 2021
1 - 2 PM**

Register online now!

Click [here](#) to register for April 15 webinar.

Did you know...?

Professional development opportunities for infant and toddler providers are available through the Virginia Infant & Toddler Specialist Network.



Infant and Toddler Endorsement

Online classes are accessed using a link. Assistance and mentoring is available along with the incentives below.

- 3 courses-\$20 Gift Card
- 6 courses-\$40 Gift Card
- 9 courses-\$40 Gift Card

- 12 courses-\$100 Gift Card

CDA

Two options to complete CDA course are available. Care Course training books can be mailed to you. Once completed, scores are submitted online. The second option is to complete coursework online through Better Kid Care/Penn State. These classes are taken online by using a provided voucher. Assistance with the portfolio process is offered over the phone or through video call. Below are the incentives that are available.

- 30 Hours/2 Courses-\$40 Gift Card
- 60 Hours/4 Courses-\$80 Gift Card
- 90 hours/6 courses-\$120 Gift Card
- 120 hours/8 courses-\$160 Gift Card

Infant Toddler Career Studies Certificate

Community college classes are offered online. Support completing applications and scholarships as well as incentives are available.

- 1 course-\$200 Gift Card
- 2 courses-\$200 Gift Card
- 3 courses-\$200 Gift Card
- 4 courses-\$200 Gift Card
- 5 courses-\$200 Gift Card

Incentives are available as funding allows. In order to obtain incentives, training has to be completed within a certain timeframe and providers must be working with children under 36 months to qualify. For more information, contact Mary Sheldon, Professional Development Coordinator, at pd@va-itsnetwork.org.



A nonprofit agency changing the lives of babies, toddlers & their families

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Visit CDR Now

