

# Autism

## Federal Definition

Autism is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three that adversely affects a child's educational performance. (A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age 3 could be diagnosed as having autism if the other criteria of this Section are satisfied.) Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance.

## State Definition

The Illinois definition is the same as the federal definition as stated above.

## Diagnostic Criteria (DSM-5)

A diagnosis of Autism is arrived at when a child has impairments in each of the three areas:

- Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity
- Non-verbal communications
- Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships

and in two of the following areas:

- Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech
- Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized verbal or nonverbal behavior
- Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity
- Hyper-or-hypo reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment

## DSM-5 Criteria

Must meet criteria A, B, C and D:

- A. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interactions across contexts, not accounted for by general developmental delays, and manifest by all 3 of the following:
  1. Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity; ranging from abnormal social approach and failure of normal back and forth conversation through reduced sharing of interests, emotions, and affect and response to total lack on initiation of social interaction.
  2. Deficits in nonverbal communication behaviors used for social interaction; ranging from poorly integrated-verbal and nonverbal communication, through abnormalities in eye contact and body-language, or deficits in understanding and use of nonverbal communication, to total lack of facial expression or gestures.
  3. Deficits in developing and maintaining relationships, appropriate to developmental level (beyond those with caregivers); ranging from difficulties in sharing imaginative play and in making friends to an apparent absence of interest in people.
- B. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities as manifested by at least two of the following:
  1. Stereotyped or repetitive speech, motor movements, or use of objects; (such as simple motor stereotypies, echolalia, repetitive use of objects, or idiosyncratic phrases).
  2. Excessive adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior, or excessive resistance to change; (such as motoric rituals, insistence on same route or food, repetitive questioning or extreme distress at small changes).
  3. Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus; (such as strong attachment to or preoccupation with unusual objects, excessively circumscribed or perseverative interests).
  4. Hyper-or-hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of environment; (such as apparent indifference to pain/heat/cold, adverse response to specific sounds or textures, excessive smelling or touching of objects, fascination with lights or spinning objects).
- C. Symptoms must be present in early childhood (but may not become fully manifest until social demands exceed limited capacities).
- D. Symptoms together limit and impair everyday functioning.

## Adverse Effect

- Inability to independently demonstrate acquisition of age/grade skills aligned to learning standards in the general classroom
- Inability to establish or maintain appropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Difficulty meeting the general behavior requirements in adaptive behavior of school settings (e.g: tantrums, change in routine, daily living skills, social/emotional regulation)