






Background Information

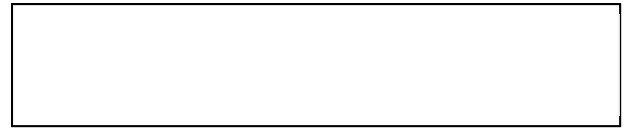
 **What are Autism Spectrum Disorders?** Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a range of complex neurodevelopment disorders, characterized by social impairments, communication difficulties, and restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behavior. Autistic disorder, sometimes called autism or classical ASD, is the most severe form of ASD, while other conditions along the spectrum include a milder form known as Asperger syndrome, the rare condition called Rett syndrome, and childhood dis-integrative disorder and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (usually referred to as PDD-NOS). Although ASD varies significantly in character and severity, it occurs in all ethnic and socioeconomic groups and affects every age group. ---Nat'l Association of Neurological Disorders

Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are a group of developmental disabilities that typically begin before a child is 3 years of age and last throughout a person's life. People with ASDs have substantial challenges in social interaction and communication. They handle information in their brain differently than other people, and might have unusual ways of learning, paying attention, and reacting to different sensations. ASDs are part of the broader category of pervasive developmental disorders (PDDs) and include autistic disorder, Asperger disorder, and pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS). Although everyone with an ASD has significant challenges in certain areas of his or her life, some might be gifted in other areas. Also, not everyone with an ASD has the same challenges. Some individuals might have relatively good verbal skills, but have difficulty interacting with other people. Others might not be able to talk or have very little ability or interest in communicating or interacting with others. –Centers for Disease Control

 **How prevalent is Autism?** The Centers for Disease Control estimates that the current rate of autism is 1 in 110 children (1 in 80 for boys, 1 in 240 for girls.) Diagnostic criteria for autism and related developmental disabilities came out in 1980, and they have been revised several times. Although good records of prevalence were not kept in the United States until the late 1990's, autism was considered a "rare" occurrence until 1996. The CDC began monitoring autism diagnoses in 2000. In their report, they outline a 57% increase in autism diagnoses from 2002 to 2006.

 **What is High-Functioning Autism?** High-functioning autism is not a medical term or a specific diagnosis. It is a term used to describe a group of individuals who exhibit some but not all autistic symptoms and characteristics, and who developed speech typically.

Included in this category are those with Asperger's Syndrome and PDD-NOS (Pervasive Developmental Disorder—Not otherwise specified.) The National Autism Society in the UK says this : "Both people with PDD-NOS and AS are affected by the triad of impairments common to all people with autism. Both groups are likely to be of average or above average intelligence." So many people with Asperger's or PDD-NOS



have high intelligence that it has been called the “Gifted” or “Geek Syndrome.” In fact, many researchers today are concerned that a diagnosis of Asperger’s or PDD-NOS may be preventing access to gifted programs.



Why should this matter to me? Teens and Adults with high-functioning autism are a growing population in the world who are impaired in social communication. Churches run on social communication – there are unspoken expectations of behavior, meaning, roles and communication—and most churches are not prepared for the more organized communication required to incorporate these teens and adults.

The CDC estimates that, by the year 2016, there will be nearly 750,000 ASD teens in the United States. There is no way to estimate the number of adults in the U.S. diagnosed with high-functioning autism, although it is clear the number is growing.

Where can I find more information?

A Special Grace - <http://www.aspecialgrace.com>

Centers for Disease Control – www.cdc.gov/autism

Nat’l Institute of Neurological Disorders – www.ninds.nih.gov

The National Autism Association – www.nationalautismassociation.org

Autism Research Institute – www.autism.com

The Autism Society of America – www.autism-society.org

Asperger’s Association of New England – www.aane.org

LINKS TO INTERESTING ASPIE SITES: - List courtesy of Matt Friedman - www.dudeimanaspie.com

Accepting Asperger's Syndrome - [ww.freewebs.com/aspiefrommaine/index.htm](http://www.freewebs.com/aspiefrommaine/index.htm)

Autistic Self-Advocacy Network - www.autisticadvocacy.org

Autistic Symphony - www.autisticsymphony.com

The Global & Regional Asperger Syndrome Partnership - <http://grasp.org>

John Elder Robison - author - Look Me in The Eye <http://jerobison.blogspot.com>

Neurodiversity.com

Wrong Planet - www.wrongplanet.net