

2.0 Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

2.1 What are the common characteristics of ASD?

Adapted from CDC Website January 15, 2015

Many people with ASD have different ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things. Often people with ASD have problems with social, emotional, and communication skills. They might repeat certain behaviors and might not want change in their daily activities. Individuals with ASD may have very specific interests or fixations, and when they choose careers that match these interests, often become experts in their fields. Signs of ASD begin during early childhood and typically last throughout a person's life.

2.2 Common Concerns and Struggles in Post-Secondary

Adapted from Autism Ontario bulletin #47 Jason Manett and Dr. Kevin Stoddart

Interpreting Assignment Expectations: Sometimes, what is interesting or important to individuals with ASD is different from what is interesting or important to others. As a result, many students with ASD have difficulty interpreting assignment expectations. What a professor or instructor expects for topic selection, how much detail to include for specific sections, and which information is more important, may not be understood without support.

Behavioral and communication challenges: There are many 'unwritten rules' of classroom conduct. Sometimes students with ASD struggle to know what constitutes appropriate behaviour. Examples of errors in classroom conduct include asking too many questions, answering rhetorical questions (questions that are not meant to be answered), answering with too much detail, going 'off-topic' and speaking too much or too little in tutorials.

Group work can also be a challenge. Some students with ASD struggle with turn-taking, dividing tasks, and integrating components of work. Labs are complex settings that require processing instructions relating to unfamiliar tasks, transitioning between stations, performing fine motor tasks, and coordinating with other students – often within tight time constraints. This can be challenging for students with ASD because of social, communication, sensory and information-processing differences.

Post-secondary students with ASD often have **difficulty writing to and speaking with professors** and instructors, administrative staff from the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) In particular, identifying a need for help and explaining what help is needed may be challenging.

Social Challenges: Students with ASD often have unique and intense interests that are different from their peers. In addition, the communication style of these students is often different. These students frequently enter post-secondary with less experience related to friendships and romantic relationships, as well as lower levels of participation in social activities. As a result, interacting with other students can be challenging since the post-secondary experience is associated with expectations of high levels of social engagement and sexuality.

Organizational and Decision-Making Challenges: Many students with ASD have difficulty deciding about course load, program choice, whether to continue in or drop a course (in cases when grades are low), whether to ask for help, what to ask for and when to ask. This relates to challenges imagining

possible outcomes, general difficulties with interpersonal communication, anxiety, and the pressure to make decisions in a timely manner.

2.3 Appropriate Post-Secondary Support Services

- **Orientation programs:** Orientation programs provide opportunities for students with ASD to:
 - Meet new people and develop friendships
 - Meet support staff and learn about the roles and how help is structured in a post-secondary environment
 - Learn where services are and how things work [Available at most schools]
- **Transition programs:** In addition to the resources and benefits of orientation programs, transition programs help students:
 - Prepare for the differences between high school and post-secondary school,
 - Anticipate and address potential problems, and
 - Provide an avenue for students to connect with school supports [Available at most schools]
- **ASD-specific support groups:** ASD specific support groups allow students with similar interests, concerns, and communication styles to develop friendships, provide support and share information. [Available at Algonquin College and York University]
- **Peer mentoring:** Mentorship programs help integrate students into the school community and navigate the services offered within the school. Mentors can help familiarize students with new environments and answer questions. [Available at most schools]
- **Peer tutoring/academic support:** Peer tutoring and academic support services can provide:
 - Support for students in completing assignments or essays
 - Support for students who need help with editing, reviewing or general support with coursework. [Available at most schools]
- **Academic advising:** Academic advisors can assist students in choosing courses and planning their academic paths. [Available at most schools]

2.4 Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)

All students with disabilities should register with the Office for Students with Disabilities in order to arrange academic accommodations for their courses. Accommodations are meant to be matched to specific functional limitations of a student's disability to provide students with an equal opportunity to participate in the coursework. Accommodations that may be available for students with ASD include:

- Learning Strategist/Academic Coach: support in understanding course expectations, managing group work, time management
- Note-taking
- Exam accommodations (extra time, private room, etc.)
- Adaptive technology

2.4.1 Documentation Required

- Visit our Colleges or Universities section, or contact your post-secondary school's Office for Students with Disabilities to learn what documentation is required at your school. Requirements can vary widely from school to school, and it is important to learn what

specifically what documentation is required, especially before arranging or paying for an assessment.

- Documentation required for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder ranges widely from school to school. At some post-secondary institutions, a **medical form or letter from a qualified practitioner (physician, psychologist, specialist, etc.)** is sufficient as documentation. At other institutions, a more **comprehensive psycho-educational assessment** conducted by a psychologist is required. Psycho-educational assessments can cost \$2,000-3,000, however funding may be available through OSAP (and the Bursary for Students with Disabilities) or another source. For institutions that do require a psycho-educational assessment, disability counselors at the Office for Students with Disabilities can assist in making a referral and investigating financial aid options.
- In either case, the documentation should outline the functional limitations that are caused by this disability and how they apply to an academic setting. The documentation may also recommend academic accommodations to address those limitations.

2.5 Community Support Services for Adults ASD:

NOTE: Eventually, we will have resources available for each community represented by a post-secondary institution.

Toronto-Based

www.autismontario.com

Autism Ontario has 26 local chapters, the locations of which can be found at the following link:

<http://www.autismontario.com/client/aso/ao.nsf/web/About+Us>

<http://www.aspergers.ca/>

The Redpath Centre: <http://www.redpathcentre.ca>

Geneva Centre: <http://www.autism.net/services/services-for-youth-and-adults.html>

www.reachtoronto.ca/

<http://www.kerrysplace.org/Public/Toronto>

[Resource Guide Adult ASD Surrey Place 2014](#)

Ottawa

- Autism Ontario Ottawa Chapter
211 Bronson Ave.
Ottawa, ON, K1R 6H5
613-230-6305 x22
ottawa@autismontario.com
www.autismontario.com/ottawa
- WAVE (Work and Volunteer Experience for Adults with Autism) Ottawa

www.waveottawa.ca
wave@dovercourt.ca

Sudbury

- Autism Ontario Sudbury & District
827 Barrydowne Rd
Sudbury, ON, P3A 4S4
sudbury@autismontario.com
<http://www.autismontario.com/client/aso/ao.nsf/Sudbury/SudburyHome>
- Northern Region Autism Intervention Program
Child Care Resources
662 Falconbridge Rd.
Sudbury, ON, P3A 4S4
1-877-996-1599
(705) 525-0055
www.childcare.on.ca/default.aspx

North Bay

- Autism Ontario North Bay and Area
269 Main Street West, Suite 304
North Bay, ON, P1B 2T8
705-476-2293
www.autismontario.com/northbay

Toronto

- Geneva Centre for Autism
112 Merton Street
Toronto, ON, M4S 2Z8
416-322-7877
info@autism.net
www.autism.net
- Kerry's Place Autism Services
34 Berczy Street
Aurora, ON, L4G 1W9
(905) 841-6611
info@kerrysplace.org
www.kerrysplace.org
- Autism Partnership Toronto (in conjunction with "A Circle of Support")

100 York Blvd, Suite 115
Richmond Hill, ON, L4B 1J8
(905) 762-9909
carol@acircleofsupport.com

- Reach Toronto
2238 Dundas Street West, Suite 206
Toronto, ON, M6R 3A9
(416) 929-1670
mary@reachtoronto.ca
- Autism Speaks Canada
2450 Victoria Park Ave, Unit 120
Toronto, ON, M2J 4A2
1-888-362-6227
autismspeaksCanada@autismspeaksCanada.ca
www.autismspeaks.ca
- Autism Ontario Toronto
1032 Pape Avenue
P.O. Box 60007
Toronto, ON, M4K 3Z3
1 (866) 925- 9969
toronto@autismontario.com

Nipissing

- Autism Ontario West Nipissing
1-866-626-9100 Ext 3561
autismnorthbay@gmail.ca

Waterloo

- Autism Services Waterloo Region
The Family Centre for Autism
65 Hanson Ave
Kitchener, ON, N2C 2H6
- Autism Ontario Waterloo Region
P.O. Box 42064
Waterloo, ON
N2L 6K5
waterloo@autismontario.ca
- University of Waterloo Autism Support Group
<https://uwaterloo.ca/disability-services/current-students/resources-support-groups-0>
- Waterloo Wellington Autism Services

591 Guildwood Place
Waterloo, ON, N2K 3M3
Rm.hollingsworth@rogers.com

Thunder Bay

- Autism Ontario Thunder Bay & District
425 Edward Street North
Northwood Park Plaza
Thunder Bay, ON, P7C 4P7
807-622-9713
www.autismontario.com/thunderbay

Oshawa

- Autism Ontario Durham Region
P.O. Box 40008
Whitby, ON, L1R 0G2
905-432-5092
durham@autismontario.com
- Kerry's Place
1077 Boundary Rd, Unit 212
Oshawa, ON, L1J 8P8
905-579-2720
durhamcommunity@kerrysplace.org

London

- Autism Ontario London
Salvation Army building
1340 Dundas Street, East
London ON N5W 3B6
519-433-3390
london@autismontario.com
www.autismontario.com/london

Peterborough

- Autism Ontario Peterborough
Box 443 Stn Main
Peterborough, ON, K9J 6Z3
peterborough@autismontario.com

Barrie

- Autism Ontario Simcoe County
11 Ferris Lane Suite 300

Barrie, ON, L4M 5N6
705-252-7429
simcoe@autismontario.com

Niagara

- Autism Ontario Niagara Region
36 Page Street, Suite 401
St. Catharines, ON, L2R 4A7
905-682-2776
www.autismontario.com/niagara

Kingston

- Autism Ontario Kingston
361 Montreal Street
Kingston, ON, K7K 3H4
613-507-7896
kingston@autismontario.com

Oakville

- Autism Ontario Halton Chapter
2080 Appleby Line
PO Box 75034, Millcroft Post Office
Burlington, ON, L7L 6Y2
905-631-1233
halton@autismontario.com

Hamilton

- Autism Ontario Hamilton
533 Main Street East
Hamilton, ON, L8M 1H9
905-528-8476
Office.hamilton@autismontario.com

Guelph

- Autism Ontario Wellington Region
84 Upton Crescent
Guelph, ON
N1E 6P5
wellington@autismontario.com

Windsor

- Autism Services Inc of Windsor and Essex Country
Autism Services Incorporated
3600 Curry Avenue

Windsor, Ontario N9E 2T6
519-966-7283

