April is Autism Awareness Month!

"Autism is an important part of who I am, and I wouldn’t want to change it because I LIKE the way I think."

-Temple Grandin

KSD Outreach Mission: To provide the highest quality of services, resources, and support to children ages birth-21 who are deaf/hard of hearing by collaborating with their families, their communities, and the professionals that serve them.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (also known as Autism or ASD) is a disorder that is characterized by deficits in social communication development and restricted/repetitive behaviors and interests. Individuals with Autism can also have language delays/disorders, intellectual disability, and global developmental delay.

Deaf/hard of hearing (D/HH) children are at risk for both over diagnosis and under diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. There are many possible reasons for this. One is that there are not many professionals who have extensive experience with both D/HH children and children with Autism. Another is that there are currently no Autism screeners or diagnostic tests that have been validated for use with D/HH children. D/HH children with a diagnoses of Autism are typically identified later than average. This leads to a delay in Autism intervention services which has been linked to poorer outcomes compared to children who receive intervention services early (Yoshinaga-Itano & Mood, 2017). On the other hand, misdiagnosis can lead to lowered academic expectations and limited academic opportunities.

It is important to consider the child’s communication and language access history when determining if a child may have Autism. Children with Autism and D/HH children who have not had full access to language can both present with language delays that impact their social communication and behaviors. Either group may present with poor eye contact, poor joint attention, and repetitive play. One primary difference is that students who demonstrate these symptoms due to limited language access rather than Autism will engage with a communication partner who uses language at a level they are comfortable with.

Some red flags of Autism to be aware of include (DeRamus, 2015):

- Limited gesture use
- Fixated interests of unusual intensity
- Not responding to bids for attention
- Repetitive use of objects
- Sensory seeking/avoiding
- Limited functional/imaginative play
- Not sharing interests
- Limited interactions even with familiar people
- Flat affect (limited facial expression)
- Insistence on sameness
- Difficulty with changes in routine
- Repetitive motor movements (hand flapping, spinning, rocking)

RESOURCES

- Autism Society—www.autism-society.org

DIAGNOSIS OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER IN CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF/HARD OF HEARING

For more information, contact the KSD Outreach team at:

913-210-8149
KSDOutreach@kssdb.org
450 E. Park Street
Olathe, KS 66061

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