
News Releases

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Autism Society Officials: Report Points to Need for Greater Investment

[View the Indiana University Media Release](#) (October 6, 2009)

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. -- A national report revealing that 1 percent of U.S. children ages 3-17 have an autism spectrum disorder points to the need for a greater investment in understanding and responding to autism, according to an Indiana University expert and Autism Society official.

"The increasing incidence of autism spectrum disorders further illustrates the importance for expanded services, training and resources for families and individuals living with this disability," said Cathy Pratt, chair of the Autism Society board of directors and director of the Indiana Resource Center for Autism at IU Bloomington.

The report, published Monday (Oct. 5) in the journal *Pediatrics* by researchers from the government's Health Resources and Services Administration, estimated the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder to be 1 in every 91 children. This is a dramatic increase from the 1-in-150 rate previously reported.

"This national study charts a dramatic rise in the prevalence of autism in the United States and we applaud this administration's recognition that autism is an urgent public health priority," said Autism Society President and CEO Lee Grossman. "But families today are asking: How high must these prevalence rates rise before the nation responds? Significant resources must be directed toward screening and diagnosis, affordable interventions that treat the whole person and comprehensive education plans to foster lifelong skill development so that people with autism will have the ability to work and live independently."

The report, titled "Prevalence of Parent-Reported Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder among Children in the US," was produced by the Department of Health and Human Services National Survey of Children's Health, using data from the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The study was conducted via a telephone survey of more than 78,000 parents.

On a constituent call to discuss the report, the CDC reported Monday that its initial analysis of the Autism and Developmental Delay Monitoring project data, due out later this fall, confirm the 1 percent figure. This report will also contain more data on age of diagnosis, groups affected and access to interventions.

The increasing numbers have long-term economic costs to the country, as autism is a chronic medical condition affecting people across the lifespan. "Lifespan services, particularly for adults, are typically inadequate and inappropriate," Grossman said. "This new data should be a call to action to the government to improve and increase services and supports first."

The Autism Society has been working with Congress on several key bills to increase funding for autism research and services. On Monday, Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and Congressional Autism Caucus Co-chairs Rep. Mike Doyle, D-Pa., and Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., called for passage of the Autism Treatment Acceleration Act of 2009. This bill would provide funding for applied research into effective interventions and the first ever demonstration grants on adult services. It also would create an adult prevalence study and fund family support and information networks.

For more information, contact Pratt at prattc@indiana.edu or 812-855-6508. For more information about the Autism Society or to schedule an interview, contact Carin Yavorcik, media specialist, at 419-787-8146 or cyavorcik@autism-society.org, or Marguerite Kirst Colston, vice president of constituent relations, at 240-672-4734 or mcolston@autism-society.org.

About autism

Autism is a complex neurodevelopmental disability that typically appears during the first two years of life and affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. Autism is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is a "spectrum disorder" that affects individuals differently and to varying degrees. There is no known single cause for autism, but increased awareness and funding can help families today.

About the Autism Society

The Autism Society, the nation's leading grassroots autism organization, exists to improve the lives of all affected by autism. It does this by increasing public awareness about the day-to-day issues faced by people on the spectrum, advocating for appropriate services for individuals across the lifespan, and providing the latest information regarding treatment, education, research and advocacy. For more information, visit <http://www.autism-society.org>.

About the Indiana Resource Center for Autism

The Indiana Resource Center is part of the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, an Indiana University Bloomington research center that is committed to providing Hoosiers with disability-related information and services that touch the entire life span, from birth through older adulthood. Staff conduct outreach training and consultations, engage in research and develop and disseminate information focused on building the capacity of local communities, organizations, agencies and families to support children and adults across the autism spectrum. For more information, see <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/>.