



There are many Somali and non-Somali children with autism spectrum disorder

Make sure your child and family get the help they need

What is autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

ASD is a brain disorder that affects how a person thinks, communicates, and interacts with others in different ways. Most signs of ASD appear in early childhood. Children with ASD play, learn, speak, and act differently than other children. ASD is a life-long condition, but symptoms may change and improve over time.

What was the Minneapolis Somali ASD Prevalence Project about?

Many Somali parents and others expressed a concern that there appeared to be more Somali children with ASD than other children. The University of Minnesota led a project to see how many children ages 7- to 9-years-old in Minneapolis have ASD. The project looked at Somali and non-Somali children.

What did this project find?

- About 1 in 32 Somali children aged 7-9 years in 2010 was identified as having ASD in Minneapolis. Somali and White children were more likely to be identified with ASD than Black and Hispanic children.
- Somali children with ASD were more likely to have an intellectual disability than children in other racial and ethnic groups in Minneapolis.
- The age at first ASD diagnosis was around 5 years for Somali, White, Black, and Hispanic children.

Why is this project important?

- Somali parents can use project findings to raise awareness of ASD among their family and friends.
- Educators, health care providers, and Somali advocates can use findings to promote early identification efforts and also encourage families to connect to services and supports as soon as possible.
- Researchers can use project findings to look at how and why ASD affects children differently.

What can I do if I think my child might have ASD?

- Talk to an educator or doctor about your concerns. Don't wait. Getting help early is important for your child.
- If your child is 5-years-old or younger, call the **Help Me Grow Program** at 1-866-693-4769. Services are free to all children. It does not matter where your child was born.
- If your child is older than 5, contact your local school district's Special Education Director. More Information is available at <http://w20.education.state.mn.us/WebsiteContent/SpecEdDirectors.jsp>. Again, services are free to all children.
- Talk to others who help children and families with ASD. They are there to support you.

What should I do if I want to learn more about this project?

Find more information about the project and links to helpful community resources at rtc.umn.edu/autism. Contact project staff: Anab Gulaid, 612-624-0730, Kristin Hamre, 612-625-7593 or autism@umn.edu.

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