

4. Improve Services and Supports

Targeted education services, professional training and social and health supports are needed for all Canadians with ASD across the lifespan. These include:

- supports to facilitate community inclusion such as teachers and aides with specialized autism education training;
- life skills programs, mental health services provided by professionals trained in ASD issues;
- career and vocational training;
- assisted living support;
- supports for caregivers, including respite, family training and assistance, sibling supports, social services and long-term planning assistance; and,
- better financial and vocational supports to individuals with disabilities and their families.



5. Foster Research

Significant monies must be targeted for ASD research to Canadian funding organizations. In addition to research on causes and prevalence, research that provides individuals with ASD and their families with the practical support and services they need should also be promoted.

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Autism Society Canada
Société canadienne de l'autisme

ABOUT US

Autism Society Canada (ASC) is a national non-profit charitable organization. Founded in 1976, Autism Society Canada is committed to advocacy, public education, information and referral, and support for its regional societies.

Over the last 30 years our mandate has remained constant: to work toward the necessary changes that will improve the quality of life of Canadians with Autism Spectrum Disorders across their lifespan. We promote current understanding of ASD issues and respect for differences.

ASC is a federation of Canada-wide provincial and territorial autism societies or their equivalent. By linking its member societies across the country, ASC represents a very large collective voice of the autism community in Canada. The provincial and territorial autism societies and their member groups in each region provide direct support to people with ASD and their families.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Also referred to as autism, ASD is a neurological disorder which causes developmental disability. The term “spectrum” refers to a continuum of severity or developmental impairment. People with ASD develop differently from others in the areas of motor, language, cognitive and social skills.

Autism causes difficulties with verbal and non-verbal communication; difficulties with social interaction and understanding; and, unusual patterns of behaviour, activities and interests.

There are approximately 200,000 Canadians living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. This figure does not account for the numerous family members and caregivers whose lives are profoundly affected by autism. **It is estimated that one in every 165 Canadian children born today has an ASD.** Disabilities caused by ASD might be very mild in one person and quite severe in another.

Autism Society Canada’s Goals

- Increase awareness and understanding of ASD and participation of individuals with ASD;
- Promote federal policies, programs, and legislation that respond to the needs of the Autism community;
- Promote evidence-based services/treatment, best practices and standards;
- Promote targeted ASD research.



OUR VISION

That people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) achieve their individual potential and that they and their families have universal access to the resources they require.

Programs & Priorities

- **Public Awareness, Education and Referral:** ASC is the first point of contact for many affected individuals and families and we provide pro-active support and referral. We are also an important resource for national and regional media. The ASC website provides up-to-date information on ASD and over 400 resource and referral links.
- **Promotion of Participation of Individuals with ASD:** ASC has taken concrete steps to increase the representation of persons with ASD on its Board and in its day-to-day work. ASC has an active Advisory Committee of Adults with ASD which provides ongoing advice to the Board. Inclusivity has benefited the organization significantly by broadening our perspective and increasing our awareness.
- **Community Networking and Development:** ASC collaborates with all of its partners to reduce the impact of ASD on individuals and their families; to improve ASD service delivery across the country; and to address national issues and concerns common to our provincial and territorial member societies.
- **Promotion of Evidence-based Services, Treatment, Best Practices and Standards:** ASC works to ensure universally accessible treatment and service opportunities for people of all ages with ASD.

- **Working with Government:** ASC promotes federal policies, programs, and legislation that respond to the needs of the Autism community, including a national autism strategy. Our White Paper, *Canadian Autism Research Agenda and Canadian Autism Strategy* identified key areas for research and a strategy to address the present autism situation in Canada. Through information sessions, briefings and ongoing collaboration, ASC works to inform federal policy makers and keep autism issues on the government agenda.

What is Needed?

People with ASD and their families need the government of Canada to take a leadership role with regard to ASD. Steps must be taken to:

1. Make Autism a National Priority

Health Canada can make autism a national priority by initiating surveillance and reporting and by setting national guidelines for treatment and service delivery.

2. Improve Screening and Diagnosis

Universal autism screening should be made available in Canada. Accurate timely diagnosis and comprehensive assessment of all aspects of ASD are essential. This must be provided by professionals with specialized ASD diagnostic training for both children and adults.

3. Improve Access to Treatment

Treatments to address educational/learning needs, behaviour issues, communication problems and/or motor and physical disabilities are vital. These may include behavioural intervention, social and self-help skills, speech and language therapy, physical or occupational therapy, specialized medical services and pharmacological assistance.

Universally accessible evidence-based treatment regardless of age or ability to pay is essential. The government can increase funding for provinces and territories to provide critical (no-cost) effective evidence-based treatment such as Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA), EIBI, and other treatments deemed necessary by an individual’s medical team for as long as they are required.