



# **K12 SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM**

An Overview for Educators

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# ECHO Idaho's Autism Series History

- 2021- ECHO Idaho receives a 4-year grant from HRSA for autism training
- January to June 2022- ECHO Idaho's Pediatric Autism Series-a 7 expert panel with focus on training PCPs and Behavioral Health Specialists to manage symptoms of autism among their patients. 12-part series modeled after and supported by University of Missouri Autism ECHO series.



# ECHO Idaho's Autism Series History

- Due to demand the series was continued July 2022 – March of 2023
- April 2023 to March 2025 ECHO Idaho Autism STAT Series- focus on training PCPs to diagnose ASD among young children with unambiguous autism.
  - 14 Participants in cohort 1
  - 18 Participants in cohort 2



# ECHO Idaho's Autism Series History

- Ongoing evaluations indicated desire for Autism Series on older children.
- We listened to you all and...
- ECHO Idaho's K12 Series:  
Supporting Students with Autism  
first meeting September 2024!



# Objectives

- Autism review
- Co-occurring conditions
- Anticipatory guidance
- Practical tips



# Autism

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a lifelong, neurodevelopmental condition characterized by deficits in **social communication and interaction**, and **restricted, repetitive repertoires of behavior, interests and activities** (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-fifth edition; DSM-5)



# Social Communication

## Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity:

- Abnormal social approach
- Failure of normal back and forth conversation
- Reduced sharing of interests, emotions, or affect
- Failure to initiate or respond to social interactions



# Social Communication

Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction:

- Poorly integrated verbal & nonverbal communication
- Abnormal eye contact and body language
- Deficits in understanding & using nonverbal communication
- Lack of facial expression or gestures





# Social Communication

**Deficits in *developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships*; ranging from:**



- Difficulties adjusting behavior to suit different social contexts
- Difficulties sharing imaginative play or making friends
- Absence of interest in peers



# Restricted/Repetitive Behavior

**Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech, such as:**



- Simple motor stereotypies
- Lining up toys or flipping objects
- Echolalia
- Idiosyncratic phrases

# Restricted/Repetitive Behavior

## Insistence on sameness, inflexible routines, or ritualized behavior:

- Need to take same route or eat same food every day
- Extreme distress at small changes
- Difficulties with transitions
- Rigid thinking patterns
- Greeting rituals



# Restricted/Repetitive Behavior

**Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus:**

- Strong attachment to/preoccupation with unusual objects
- Excessively circumscribed or perseverative interests



# Restricted/Repetitive Behavior

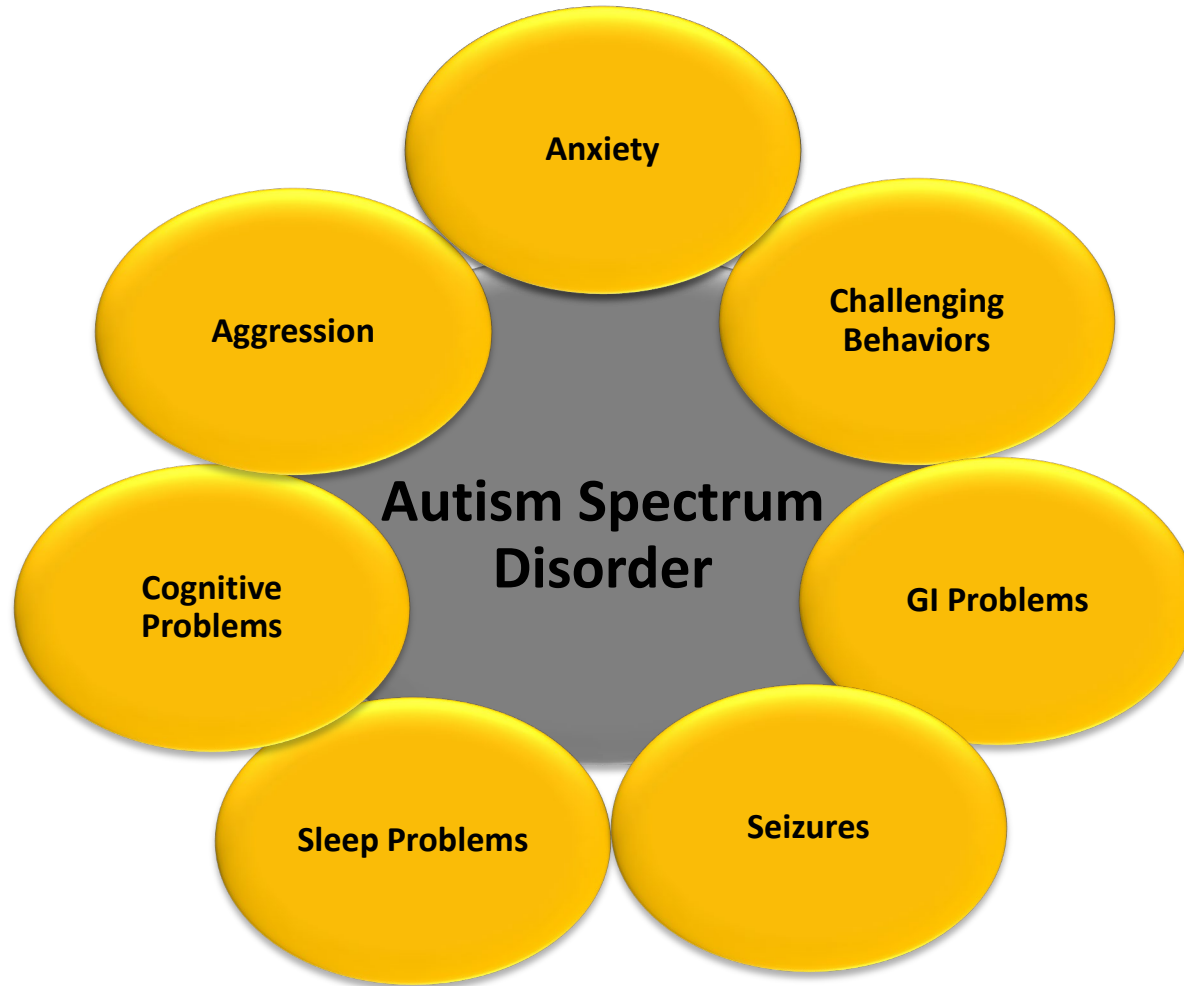
**Hyper-or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual sensory interests:**



- Indifference to pain/temperature
- Adverse response to specific sounds or textures
- Excessive smelling/touching objects
- Visual fascination with lights or movement



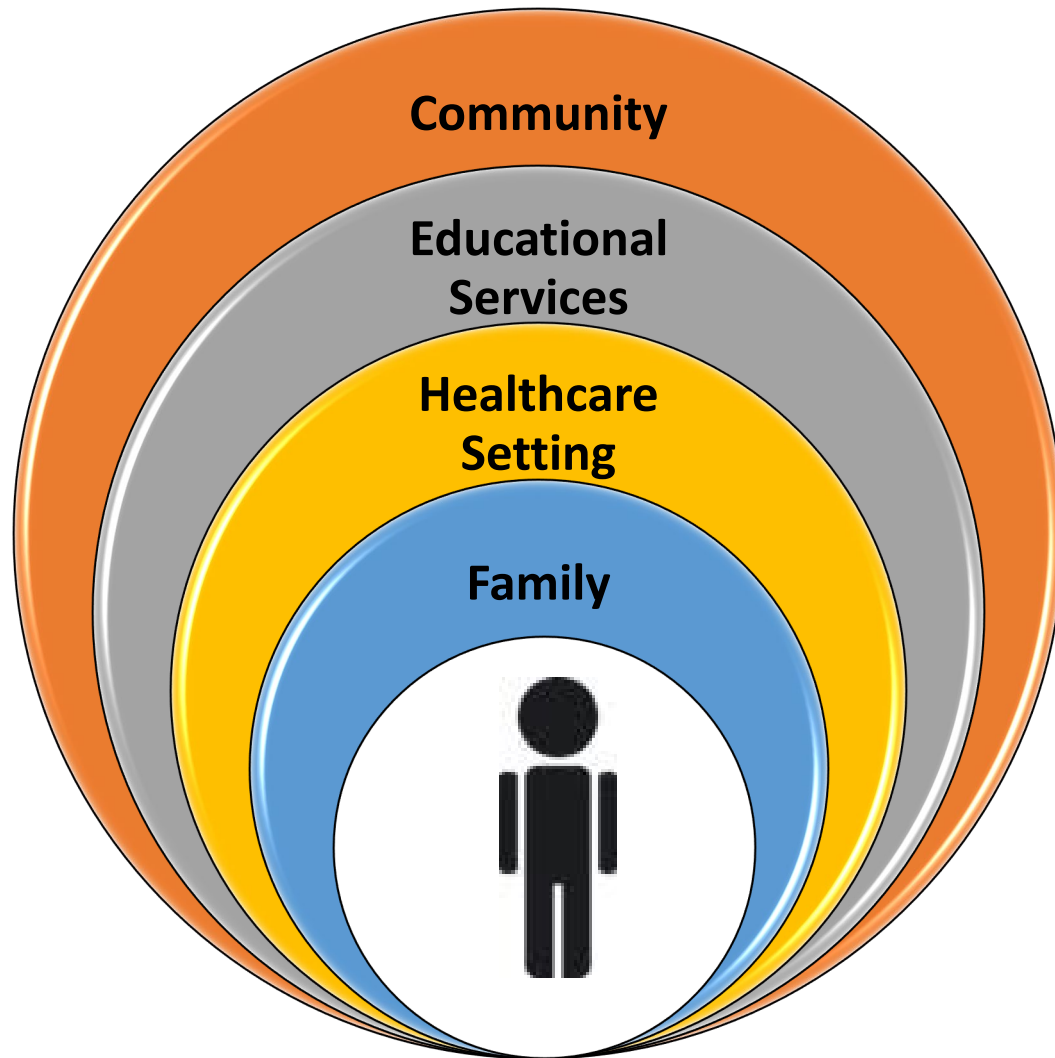
# More than Autism



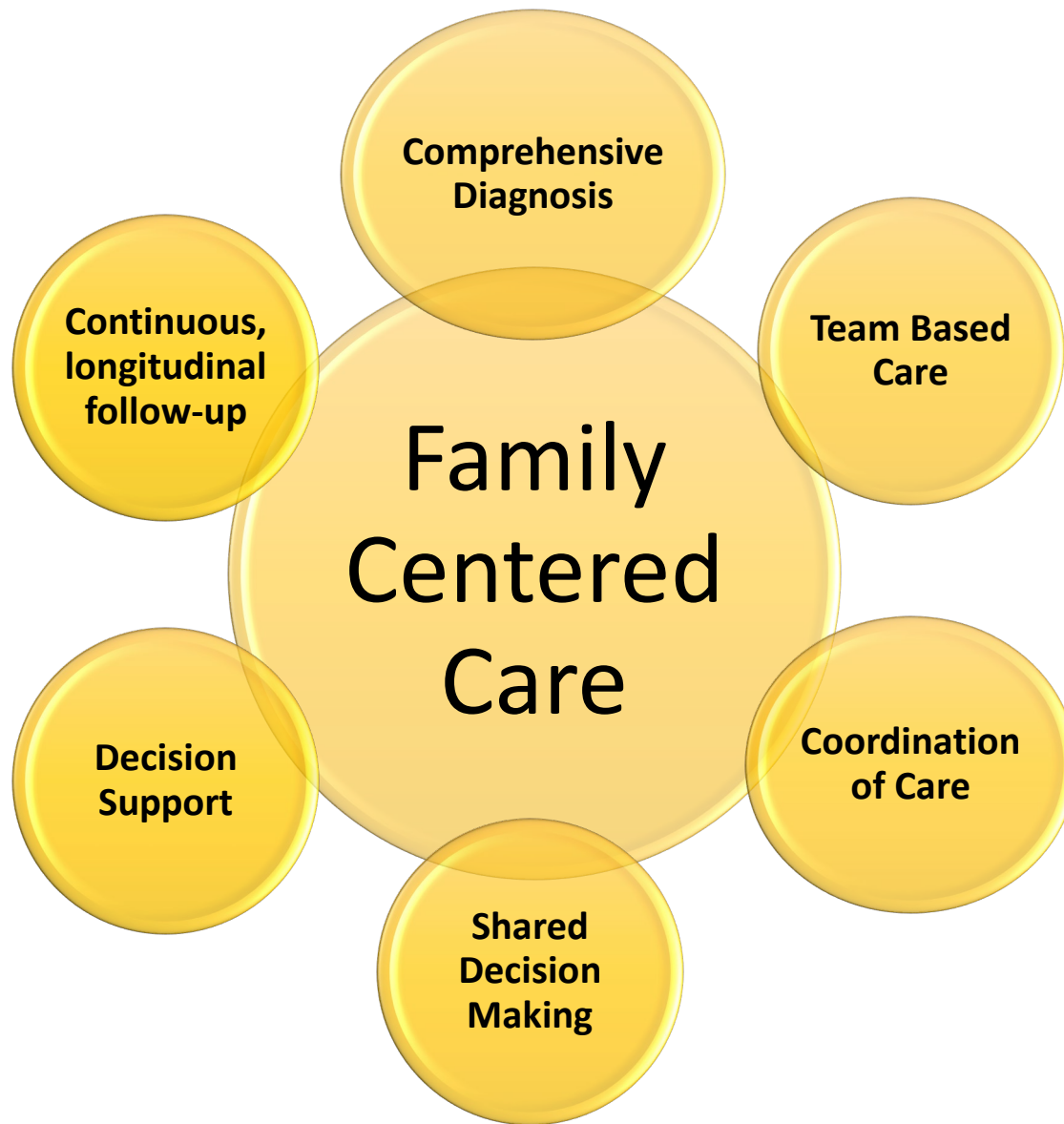
# Medical problems that may commonly occur

- Sleep concerns – onset, night wakings, snoring, daytime drowsiness
- Constipation – hard, painful or infrequent stools, irritable without explanation otherwise. May explain irritability in some autistic kids.
- Diet challenges– variety, less than 10, 10-20 or more than 20 ?
- Seizures – staring spells
- Wandering risk -elopement

# Think of the Whole Child, Not Just the Behaviors







# Teacher actions for supporting autistic children

- **Educate yourself** - a solid understanding of autism and how it may impact your students is pivotal.
- **Reach out to parents** - they are often the **top expert about your student**. Building **trust is essential**. **Share decisions** about strategies of communication and behavior management
- **Prepare the classroom** - there are some modifications to support autistic kids without impacting the class in general

# Teacher actions for supporting autistic children

- **Educate peers and promote social goals- promote acceptance** of kids with autism as full members of the class and **promote positive interactions** to support the child with autism
- **Collaborate on the implementation of educational plans-** these are essential to support kids with autism.
- **Manage behavioral challenges-** these can vary widely though consistent teacher response is critical as well as promoting pro-social behaviors

# Key Points

- Gain knowledge about Autism in children in general but especially with respect to the child before you.
- Include the village to insure best outcomes for these kids.
- Accommodations are critical for these kids with often unique needs.



# Final Thoughts

- “If you’ve met one individual with autism, you’ve met one person with autism”.  
Stephen Shore.
- “Different, not less”. Dr Temple Grandin.

# References

1. Ip A, Zwaigenbaum L, Brian JA. Post-diagnostic management and follow-up care for autism spectrum disorder. *Paediatr Child Health*. 2019 Nov;24(7):461-477. doi: 10.1093/pch/pxz121. Epub 2019 Oct 24. PMID: 31660043; PMCID: PMC6812300.
2. Identification, Evaluation, and Management of Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder, Volume 145, issue 1 January 2020
3. [Autismspeaks.org](https://www.autismspeaks.org) “Teachers and Administrators.” *Autism Speaks*, [www.autismspeaks.org/teachers-and-administrators](https://www.autismspeaks.org/teachers-and-administrators). Accessed 18 Sept. 2024.