



## Understanding Adolescence in Autism Spectrum Disorder

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December 2013  
Webinar



### Learning Objectives

- Participants will increase knowledge of..
  - characteristics of adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
  - the importance of continuous assessment to monitor changing needs and to inform supports and interventions.
  - the various strategies that can be used in the home, school, and community to support adolescents with ASD through this life phase.
  - the importance of home-school-community collaboration in supporting adolescents with ASD.

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### Adolescence

*A life changing period.....*

## Adolescent Development



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## Adolescent Development

- Adolescent development is marked by numerous changes in the child and in expectations.
  - Child: personal and social.
  - Expectations: home, school, community.

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## Adolescent Development

- Personal changes.....
  - Physical
    - Puberty and sexual development.
  - Cognitive
    - Brain development and cognitive functioning.
    - Self-awareness and self-identity.
  - Emotional
    - Changes associated with puberty and brain development.
    - Interaction with expectations.

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## Adolescent Development

- Social.....
  - Peer.
    - Friendships & intimate relationships.
  - Parent.
    - Relationships-'Parents as People'
  - Home/School/Community.
    - Increasing independence in....
      - Personal care and domestic routines.
      - School work (homework and assignments).
    - Volunteer/work.
    - Driving.

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## Adolescent Development

- Expectations.....
  - Personal care.
  - Domestic routines.
  - School work.
  - Social skills and relationships.
  - Community behavior and activities.
  - Volunteer and work experience.
  - Emotional and behavior regulation.

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*Developmental delays associated with ASD can affect adjustment during the teen years.....*

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## Adolescents with ASD

- ASD is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by...
  - Social communication and interaction impairments.
  - Restrictive and repetitive behaviors, interests, and activities.
- Related features and conditions....
  - Intellectual disability, learning disability.
  - Language impairment.
  - Emotional-behavior disorders.
  - Medical conditions.
  - Sleep and feeding disorders.

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## Adolescents with ASD

- The neurodevelopmental nature of ASD affects brain development.....
  - throughout the lifespan, particularly *during critical developmental periods*....
    - Early Childhood
    - **Adolescents/young adulthood**
  - multiple areas affected....
    - Some brain connections not made and/or develop atypically.

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## Adolescents with ASD

- Atypical brain development affects....
  - cognitive abilities.
  - social abilities.
  - language and communication abilities.
  - emotional status.
  - behavior regulation.
  - sensory-motor abilities.
- May result in less than expected 'age-appropriate' behavior in one or more areas of functioning=expectations.

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## Adolescents with ASD

## THE BRAIN-BEHAVIOR RELATIONSHIP



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## Implications

## Implications

- Developing brain and changes in biochemicals can lead to highly variable development....
  - Studies show improvement in features of ASD for many children, however....
    - Some children regress during adolescence.
      - Onset/worsening of anxiety/depression.
      - On-set of seizure disorder.
    - Sleep problems may persist.
    - Sensory problems may persist.
    - Gastrointestinal problems may persist.

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## Implications

- No good predictors of outcomes across developmental areas...
  - Higher cognitive and language skills are associated with slightly better outcomes.
  - Contextual factors may moderate outcome.
    - Treatment/intervention-length of time/intensity.
    - Supports and services-quality/consistency.
    - Presence of other problems/conditions.

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## Implications

- **Social impairments** can affect the development of self-awareness.
  - Needed for self-regulation, self-determination, self-advocacy, and development of one's self-identity.
    - May affect motivation to alter behavior to meet social expectations.
  - Develops in some, but not in all teens with ASD...some will continue to show delays.

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## Implications

- **Social impairments** can increase risk for...
  - Adjustment difficulties ...
    - Depression.
    - Increased or worsening anxiety.
    - Behavior regulation difficulties.
      - Argumentativeness, defiance, aggression etc.

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## Implications

- **Social impairments** can also affect....
  - Development of social awareness...
    - May appear immature.
    - May become target for bullying and victimization.
    - May engage in bullying behavior.
  - Understanding of ‘social rules.’
    - Puberty and sexual behavior.
    - Dating and group socializing.
    - Legal involvement may ensue.

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## Implications

- **Restricted and repetitive behaviors, interests, and activities can affect....**
  - Social skill development.
  - Leisure skill development.
  - Emotional and behavioral regulation skill development.
  - Self-initiation of personal responsibilities.
  - Completion of required/requested activities.
  - Learning ‘non-interest’ content areas.

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## Implications

- Related **cognitive and sensory-motor** impairments can affect functioning in multiple areas...
  - Initiating and completing tasks/routines.
    - Requires multiple prompts and/or supervision to complete.
  - Keeping up with increasing and more complex demands.
  - With multi-tasking and efficiently processing increasingly complex information....
    - Information overload→ anxiety, meltdown, avoidance, behavior problem.

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## Implications

- **Cognitive and sensory-motor** impairments can affect....
  - **Personal Care Skills.**
    - Hygiene routines.
    - Grooming routines.
    - Sexual behavior.
    - Health behavior.
    - Self-management of home (domestic) and school responsibilities.
    - Planning for the future.

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## Implications

- **Cognitive and sensory-motor** impairments can affect....
  - **School Performance:**
    - Self-management of work load.
      - Homework.
      - Study behavior.
    - Peer interactions.
      - 'Fitting in' and participation in groups, after-school activities/clubs, & other social activities.
    - Participation in transition planning.
      - Setting personal goals for future....
        - » College-Work-Independent Living

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## Implications

- **Cognitive and sensory-motor** impairments can affect....
  - **Community Integration Skills:**
    - Behavior regulation for different community settings.
    - Consumer skills.
    - Driving and/or public transportation.
    - Volunteer work, (summer) employment.
    - Money management.
    - Safety skills.

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## Implications

- Because of these developmental issues and changing expectations, many teens will require supports and interventions across home, school and community.

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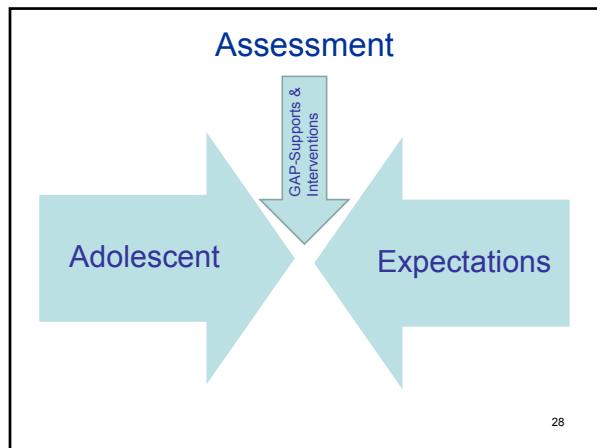
## Supporting Adolescents with ASD

## *Assessment & Intervention Considerations*

## Assessment

- Continuous *Ecological Assessment* is needed.
  - Assessment of the adolescent's current ASD/developmental profile.
  - Assessment of various settings/contexts to identify expectations and demands, and the skills needed for meeting the expectations.
  - Identify gaps between adolescent behavior/skills and expectations.
    - Informs specific support and intervention plans that may be needed.
  - Monitor response to interventions.

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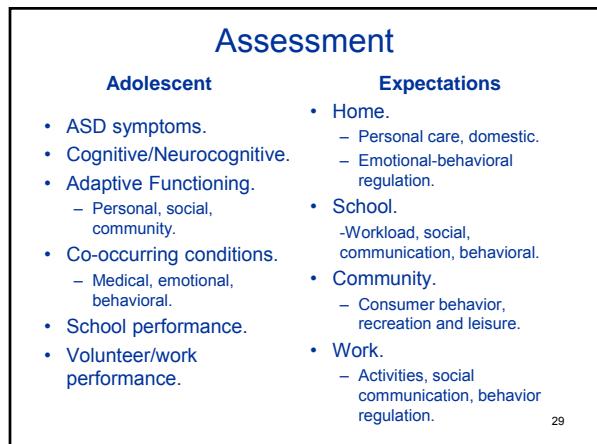
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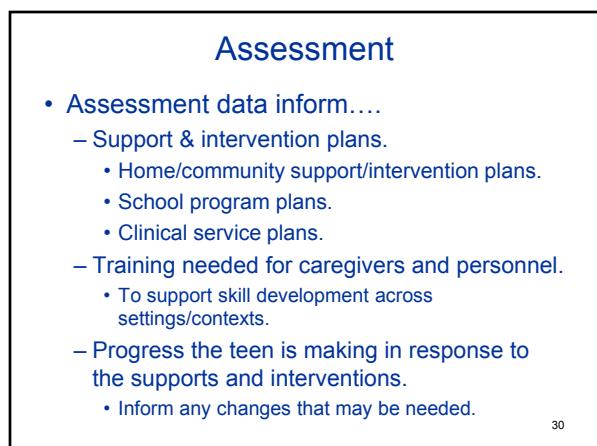
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## Supports & Interventions

## *Using data to inform support and intervention planning for Home-School-Community*

## Home Supports

## *Developing Independence*

## Home

- Support the development of independent living skills..
  - Establish clear and consistent expectations that include...
    - Specific responsibilities.
    - Timelines for completion.
    - Expected outcomes.
  - Do this for multiple areas of functioning.
  - Develop and teach specific routines for each.

## Home

- Ares of independent living ...
  - Personal Skills:
    - Grooming and hygiene.
    - Health care.
    - Sexual expression.
    - Studying time, homework & projects.
  - Consider Occupational Therapy, Health class, Residential Habilitation, Resource Room, and Counseling/Psychotherapy to assist with teaching skills.

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## Home

- Areas of independent living...
  - Domestic Skills:
    - Chores.
    - Food preparation and meal planning.
    - Money management including...
      - Budgeting.
      - Purchasing.
    - Consider Residential Habilitation services, and Home-Career course at school to assist with teaching skills.

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## Home

- Areas of independent living...
  - **Home Safety Skills:**
    - Fire drills.
    - Phone use.
    - Internet and computer use.
    - Stranger Danger.
    - Swimming classes.
    - First aid.
  - Consider Toolkits, Community courses, and Residential Habilitation services to assist with teaching skills.

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## Home

- Support the development of functional and social communication skills...
  - May require specific training in functional and social communication.
    - Health insurance may cover these services.
    - School-based speech-language & counseling services.
  - Work collaboratively with school/community personnel on strategies to transfer use of skills to home setting.

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## Home

- Set limits on repetitive behaviors & circumscribed interests.
  - Create opportunities for developing and expanding leisure/play skills and activities.
    - Consider developmentally appropriate activities.
      - peer group, setting, and expectations.
  - Establish activity schedules to assist with learning and using the skills.

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## Home

- Support the development of coping and problem-solving skills...
  - May require specific training in emotional-behavioral self-regulation (coping and problem-solving).
    - Community-based psychological/psychiatric services.
    - School-based counseling.
  - Work collaboratively with community/school therapist/counselor to transfer use of skills to home setting.

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## Home

- Strategies that can be used to teach skills and support the teen...
  - Activity schedules and task lists.
  - Direct instruction including modeling and role playing.
  - Shadowing and graduated guidance.
  - Communication Scripts and Augmentative/Alternative communication system.

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Home

- Strategies that can be used to teach skills and support the teen...
  - Reinforcement system to motivate the teen to learn and use skills.
    - Consider contingency management.
  - Social Stories to improve understanding of why its important to use skills and when to use them.

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## School Supports

## *Home-School Collaboration*

## School Supports

- Classroom supports for participation and learning...
  - Schedule systems.
  - Visual systems.
  - Universal Design for Learning.
    - Modified curriculum and differentiated instruction.
  - Classroom management system.
  - Social and functional communication supports.

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## School

- Services that can support the student.
  - IEP or 504 Plan.
    - Interdisciplinary team: planning and problem-solving.
    - Various educational and therapeutic supports and interventions, based on need.
    - Effective transition planning and preparation.
  - Counseling.
    - Focus on teaching social skills.
    - Focus on developing coping and problem-solving skills.

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## School

- Services that can support the student.
  - Coursework.
    - Home & Career.
    - Community-based Instruction (CBI).
    - School-work/work-study Program.
    - Participation in Career Development & Occupational Studies curriculum.

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## School

- Services that can support the student.
  - Speech-language.
    - Focus on functional communication training and pragmatics.
    - Focus on social communication training.
  - Peer Network.
    - Club membership.
    - Lunch buddies.
    - Reading buddies.
    - Cooperative learning groups.

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## School

- Services that can support the student.
  - Structured after school activities.
    - HW club.
    - Individual sports.
    - Other clubs (based on interest).
  - Parent-School Partnership.
    - Establish regular meetings for collaborative planning and problem-solving.

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## Community Supports

### *Home-Community Collaboration*

## Community

- Services to support the development of **community integration** skills ...
  - Community safety.
  - Travel-driving.
  - Recreation and leisure.
    - Social club or group.
    - Respite.
  - Consumer behavior.
    - Shopping.
    - Banking.
  - Volunteer and/or work experience.

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## Community

- Services can include...
  - Residential Habilitation services.
  - Parent & Agency supported community programs.
  - Community-based social and leisure groups.
  - Psychological services or other counseling services.
  - Town recreation and community centers.
  - Religious programs.

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## Community

- Consider Medicaid Service Coordination (MSC) to assist with coordinating services across settings.
  - Select someone/agency knowledgeable in ASD and community resources.
  - Select someone/agency with reputation for good follow-through.
  - Select agency known for collaboration, and with little turn over in staff.

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## Challenges

## *A review of common challenges that can effect planning & problem-solving*

## Challenges

- **Disconnected systems.**
  - Multiple service systems with different eligibility requirements, services, quality of staff and services etc.
    - Access to care issues-waitlists, location etc.
  - Current lack of guidelines for effective Care Coordination.
    - Parents often assume role of care coordinator.
      - Can lead to stress, burn-out and other problems.

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## Challenges

- Limited or no services or resources.
  - Psychiatric, psychological, recreational, social for the entire spectrum of ability and age.
  - Less than sufficient number of highly qualified professionals.
  - May not be familiar with ASD clinical and associated features OR may not be familiar with the needs of adolescents with ASD.
    - Available professionals may not be trained in appropriate assessment and treatment practices for adolescents with ASD.
  - Limited practice guidelines for this age group.

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## Challenges

- Parent may not know to begin planning for the future at this time.
  - Medical care.
    - Transition to adult medical providers.
    - Multiple specialists may be needed.
  - Guardianship.
    - Particularly for those with higher IQ this issue may be challenging.
    - Future care planning.
      - Fiscal.
      - Family.

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## Select ASD Resources

## Resources

- **Autism Speaks:** website: [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org)
  - This site contains various toolkits and guides for home, school, safety, health/medical etc.
- **Rochester Regional Center for Autism Spectrum Disorder (RRCASD).**
  - On-line educational resources, webinars, Information & Referral services.
  - Contact information:
    - Website: [www.golisano.urmc.edu/rrcasd-nyautism](http://www.golisano.urmc.edu/rrcasd-nyautism)
    - E-mail: [rrcasd@urmc.rochester.edu](mailto:rrcasd@urmc.rochester.edu)
    - Tele: 1-855-508-8485

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## Question & Answer

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