

# Chapter 1: User Guide

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## **Purpose and Source**

These guidelines offer basic concepts in providing supports for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The information and recommended strategies and modifications were compiled by committees and agreed upon by the Caring for Individuals with Autism in Washington Task Force, referred to as the Autism Task Force or ATF.

## ***Introduction***

The ATF recognizes that finding and maneuvering through the various systems in Washington State can sometimes be tedious and frustrating. Throughout the document there are multiple references to various federal laws and state agencies. A summary of pertinent federal laws and the state agencies affected by and involved with the laws can be found in the first few sections of the Appendix.

The guidelines are intended to serve as an informational tool to assist in the navigation of available treatments and services, and to understand the language and issues currently relating to ASD. They can be viewed as a map to the development of independence for the individual with ASD at the highest level possible in all life areas. The guidelines are not a required standard of practice for the education of these individuals in Washington State.

These guidelines are intended to provide recommendations based on current knowledge about how to assess the needs of individuals and obtain or deliver appropriate services and supports to children and adults with autism spectrum disorder. They are intended to help individuals with the disorder move from one developmental level to another and gain momentum in the process. These guidelines have a primary focus on individuals, from infancy throughout the lifespan. The basis for all the guidelines is to acknowledge a continuing process of change and growth.

Several decades ago, if a child was diagnosed with autism, there was little hope for leading anything close to a “normal” life. In fact, many parents were encouraged by professionals at the time to place their children with autism into institutional care to spare the families the stress and heartache of attempting to raise the children. However, recent research has demonstrated that by providing appropriate services and supports at appropriate developmental levels, significant gains in most life areas can be achieved and the person with ASD can thrive.

Also, due to a shift to the “spectrum” view of ASD, we are better able to identify and assist those individuals who have less severe forms of the disorder. These individuals were most often left undiagnosed in the past and did not receive many appropriate services or supports even though we now know they could have benefited from them. Improvements in diagnosis is essential for optimizing potential outcomes in ongoing treatment and intervention for individuals with autism. This shift will require changes in attitudes, policies, and the allocation of resources to address the needs of every person with ASD in a fair and appropriate manner.

# How to Use This Document

## **Description**

- ◆ Definition
- ◆ Medical Aspects
- ◆ Components of Learning
- ◆ Components of Instruction and Resources
- ◆ Community Transitions
- ◆ Future Life Planning
- ◆ Autism Awareness
- ◆ Training in the Community
- ◆ Advocacy

We recommend that the user of this document not look at the sections in isolation. Given the complex nature of ASD, delivery of educational supports often requires consideration of many aspects of the person simultaneously. Cross-referencing is provided to assist the reader with making a more comprehensive understanding of each of the topics. Being familiar with all contents of this document is ideal.

There is a wealth of knowledge and information included in the supplemental pieces of the Appendix. Included is information on federal disability laws, the Washington State agency appointed to carry out the law, and the Washington Administrative Code (law) that applies. These incorporate Child Find Information, Washington's System of Services Birth to Three, and Special Education age 3 through 21. The ATF recommends reading carefully through Appendices 1, 2, and 3 to discover how the laws might apply to individual situations and which agency has been appointed responsible for services under state and federal law.

There are other appendices on Educational Components, Medical Aspects, Frequently Used Terminology, References for all the citations, and a Getting Connected section with internet addresses and some phone numbers. All the information is provided to give the reader background and more insight on issues.

This document should be a part of your regular planning and training process. It should be used in tandem with continuous in-service training for families, educators, medical professionals, care providers and other service providers.

Practitioners and families are encouraged to use the information provided in these guidelines recognizing that the services should always be tailored to the individual. Not all of the recommendations will apply in every circumstance.

## **Recommended Process**

- ◆ When using this document to address a particular need, identify in the Table of Contents the section that most closely relates to the topic. Read the entire section and any referenced sections.

Work with a team to develop a plan, whether it be education, health care, or social services. When related issues arise in the planning process, review those topics and referenced sections.

- ◆ Periodically review the progress, implementation, and plan. The guidelines include recommendations for assessment, and can be used to generate next steps.
- ◆ Refine the plan and its implementation on a regular basis, returning to the Guidelines for further information and recommendations.

## **What this Document is NOT**

These guidelines are not a required standard of education for individuals with ASD in Washington. They are not intended to support any specific intervention, treatment program, methodology, or medication.