



# FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

## Military Families Learning Network

### What Do We Know: Autism Screening and Diagnosis and Supporting Families of Young Children

[militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org/event/30358/](http://militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org/event/30358/)

U.S. DEPARTMENT  
OF DEFENSE



This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Military Family Readiness Policy, U.S. Department of Defense under Award Number 2015-48770-24368.



# MILITARY FAMILIES LEARNING NETWORK

Connecting military family service providers  
and Cooperative Extension professionals to research  
and to each other through engaging online learning opportunities

[militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org](http://militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org)



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# Today's Presenter



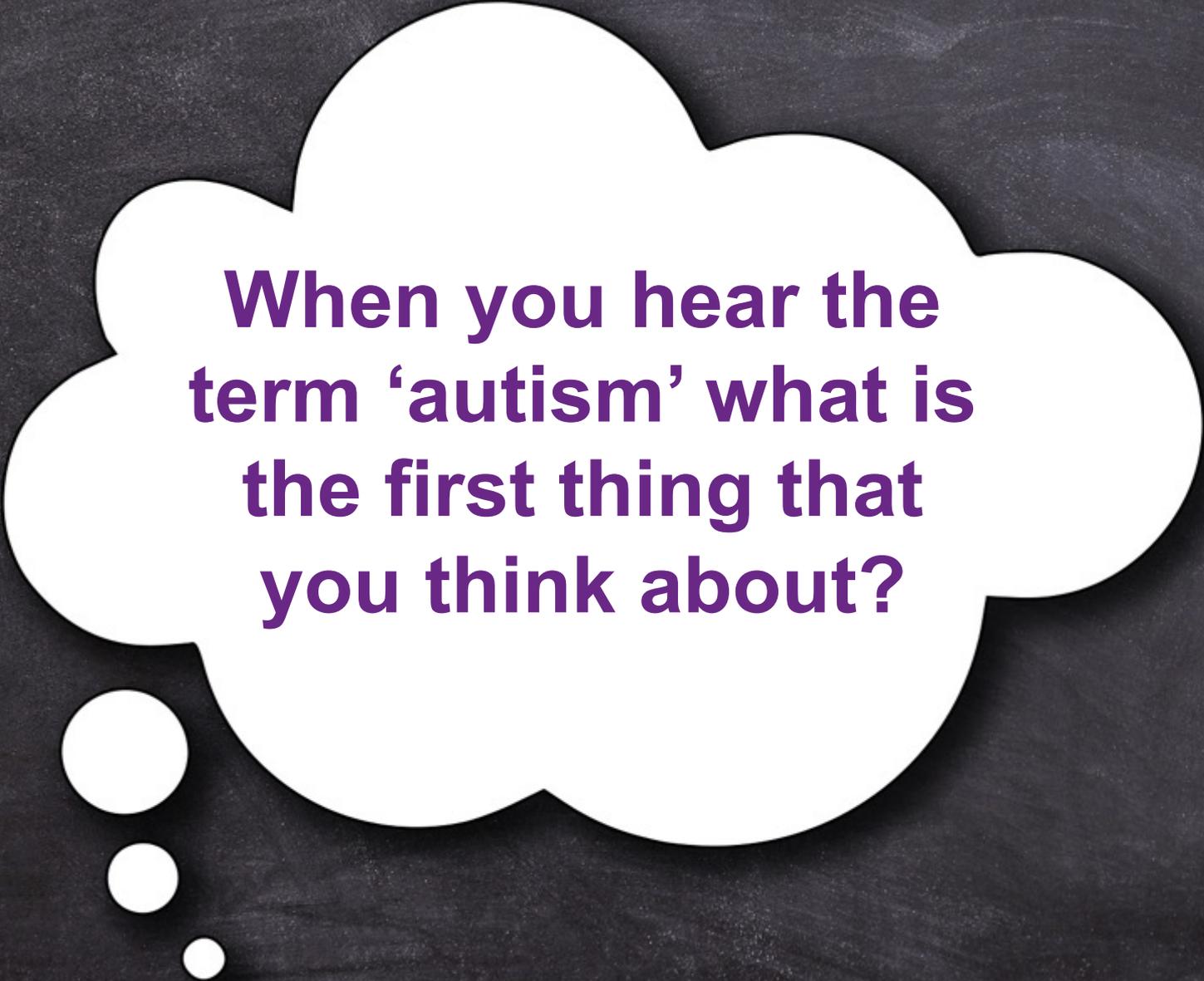
**Hedda Meadan-Kaplansky,  
Ph.D., BCBA-D**

- Professor of Special Education
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst
- Research Focus: Social-communication, challenging behavior, and intervention methods related to young children with autism and other developmental disabilities

# Objectives

We will:

- Review information on the prevalence of autism in the U.S.
- Discuss common characteristics and red flags of autism
- Highlight the process of screening and diagnosing young children with autism
- Describe best practices for partnering with and supporting families of newly diagnosed young children with autism



**When you hear the term 'autism' what is the first thing that you think about?**

# What is Autism?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is:

- A neurodevelopmental disorder
- A spectrum disorder
- Different in every child

American Psychiatric Association DSM-5 defines the following conditions as Autism Spectrum Disorder:

- Autistic Disorder
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)
- Asperger Syndrome

# Symptoms of Autism

## Primary Symptoms:

- Deficits in social communication and social interaction
- Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities



# Associated Medical Conditions

- Epilepsy
- Gastrointestinal (GI) Problems
- Feeding Issues
- Disrupted Sleep
- Sensory Issues



# Areas of Strength

Children with autism may have:

- Excellent focus in a specific area (e.g., cars, trains)
- Outstanding memory of specific items (e.g., letters, words, phrases from movies)
- Strong spatial and design skills

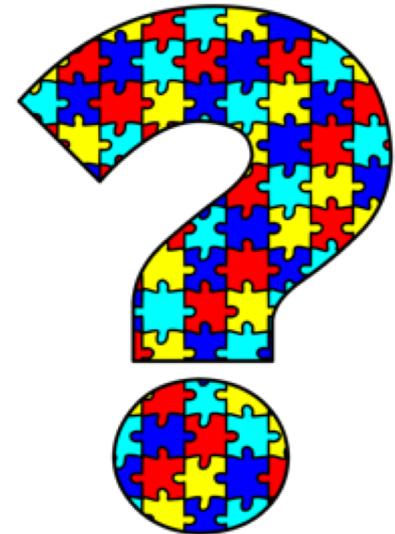


# Prevalence of Autism

- ASD occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups
- Occurs in:
  - 1 in 59 children
    - Based on children 8 years old in eleven US states (2014)
  - 1 in 40 children
    - Based on parent reports for children 3-17 years old (2016)
  - 1 in 88 children of active duty military members (2005)
    - Based on information from Operation Autism
- Four times more boys than girls

# Causes of Autism

- No single known cause for ASD
- Factors that may increase the likelihood of autism:
  - Environmental
  - Biologic
  - Genetic



# First Signs for Autism

- Autism is lifelong
- First signs of autism occur at varying times during a child's first three years of life
- Some parents notice signs before 1 year of age (33-50%) but more report concerns by 2 years of age (80-90%)
- Some children with autism may develop typically and then stop gaining new skills or lose existing skills



**What does 'autism'  
look like?**

# Red Flags for Autism

## Social Communication

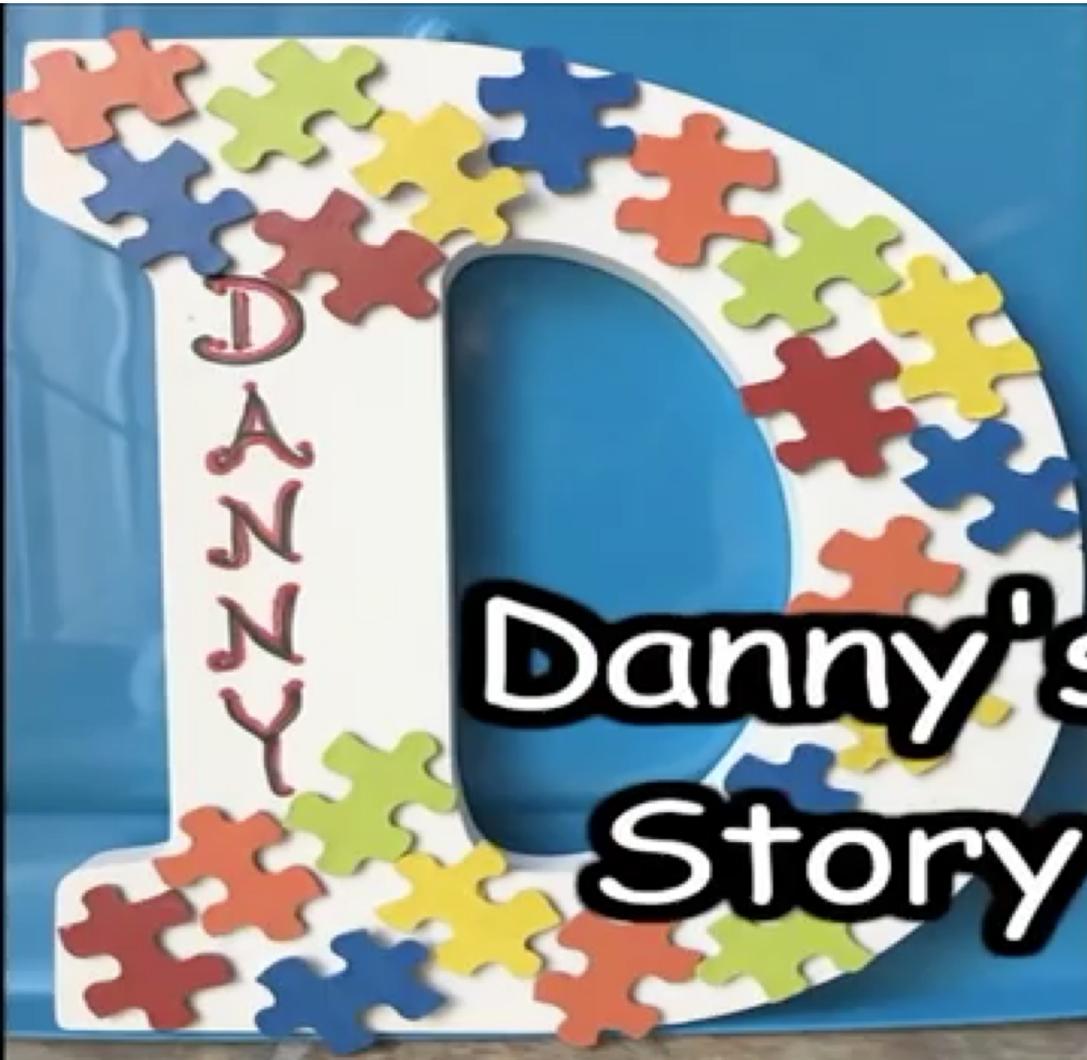
- Limited gestures to show interest by 14 months
- Does not play pretend games by 18 months
- Delayed speech & language skills

## Social Interaction

- Does not respond to their name by 12 months
- Avoids eye contact & prefers to be alone
- Struggles to understand the feelings of others or talk about their own feelings

## Repetitive Behaviors & Restricted Interests

- Repeats words or phrases over & over
- Has obsessive interests
- Repetitive body movements
- Reacts unusually to sounds, smells, tastes, or feels



Danny's  
Story

# How Early Can a Child be Diagnosed with Autism

- Autism can be detected at 18 months or younger
- A child can be diagnosed with autism by age 2
- Only a small number are diagnosed before age 3
- However, fewer than half of children identified with autism were diagnosed before they turned 4 years old



# Young Children with Disabilities

## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

- Part C: Provides services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and delays from birth through age 2
- Part B: Provides services for preschoolers with disabilities and delays, including children ages 3 through 5



Images from Pixabay.com, CC0



# Infants and Toddlers With Disabilities and Delays

## Part C – By the Numbers

- 388,694 children ages birth through 2 years received services
- 63% males and 37% females
- 90% of these children received their services in their home.
- About 60% of children served under Part C were eligible for Part B services when they turned 3 years old



Image from Pixabay.com, CC0

# Young Children with Disabilities

## Part B – By the Numbers

- 773,595 children ages 3 through 5 years received services
- 70% males and 30% females
- Children received services primarily under the following categories:
  - Speech and Language Impairments – 42%
  - Developmental Delays – 37%
  - **Autism – 11%**





The **earlier** autism is diagnosed, the **sooner** treatment services can begin.

# Screening and Diagnosing

Two Steps:

- Developmental Screening
- Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation



# Screening

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all children be screened for developmental delays and disabilities during regular well-child doctor visits at: 9 months, 18 months, and 24 or 30 months.
- In addition, all children should be screened specifically for autism during regular well-child doctor visits at: 18 months and 24 months

# Screening Tools

## Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)

- Parent-completed questionnaire
- General screening tool

## Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (MCHAT)

- Parent-completed questionnaire
- Designed to identify children at risk for autism

## Screening Tool for Autism in Toddlers and Young Children (STAT)

- Interactive screening tool
- Designed for children with suspected developmental concerns

# Diagnosis

Comprehensive evaluation includes a review of child's behavior and development and interviewing the caregiver

May include a hearing and vision screening, genetic testing, neurological testing, and other medical testing

## Specialists Who May Diagnose Autism:

- Developmental Pediatricians
- Child Neurologists
- Child Psychologists or Psychiatrists

# Assessment Tools

## Autism Diagnostic Interview – Revised (ADI-R)

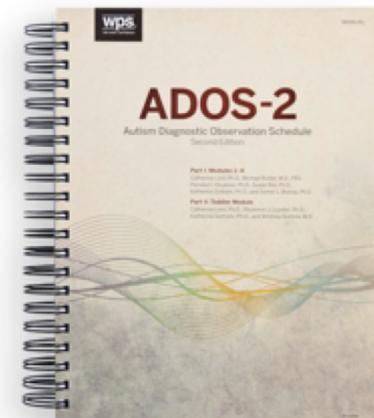
- For children and adults with mental ages 18 months and beyond
- Focuses on:
  - Reciprocal social interaction
  - Communication and language
  - Restricted and repetitive stereotyped interests and behaviors



# Assessment Tools

## Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS)

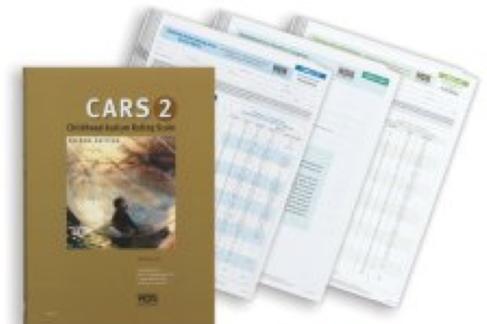
- Administered to individuals suspected of having ASD based on their expressive language skill level
- Assesses:
  - Social interaction
  - Communication
  - Play
  - Imaginative use of materials
- Consists of four 30-minute modules



# Assessment Tools

## Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS)

- Suitable for children over 2 years of age
- Includes items from five systems for diagnosing autism that cover a particular characteristic, ability, or behavior



Screenshot from WSPublish.com

“If you meet **one** person with autism, you've met **one** person with autism.”

-Dr. Stephen Shore



# Caregivers and Families

All adults play an important role in a child's life

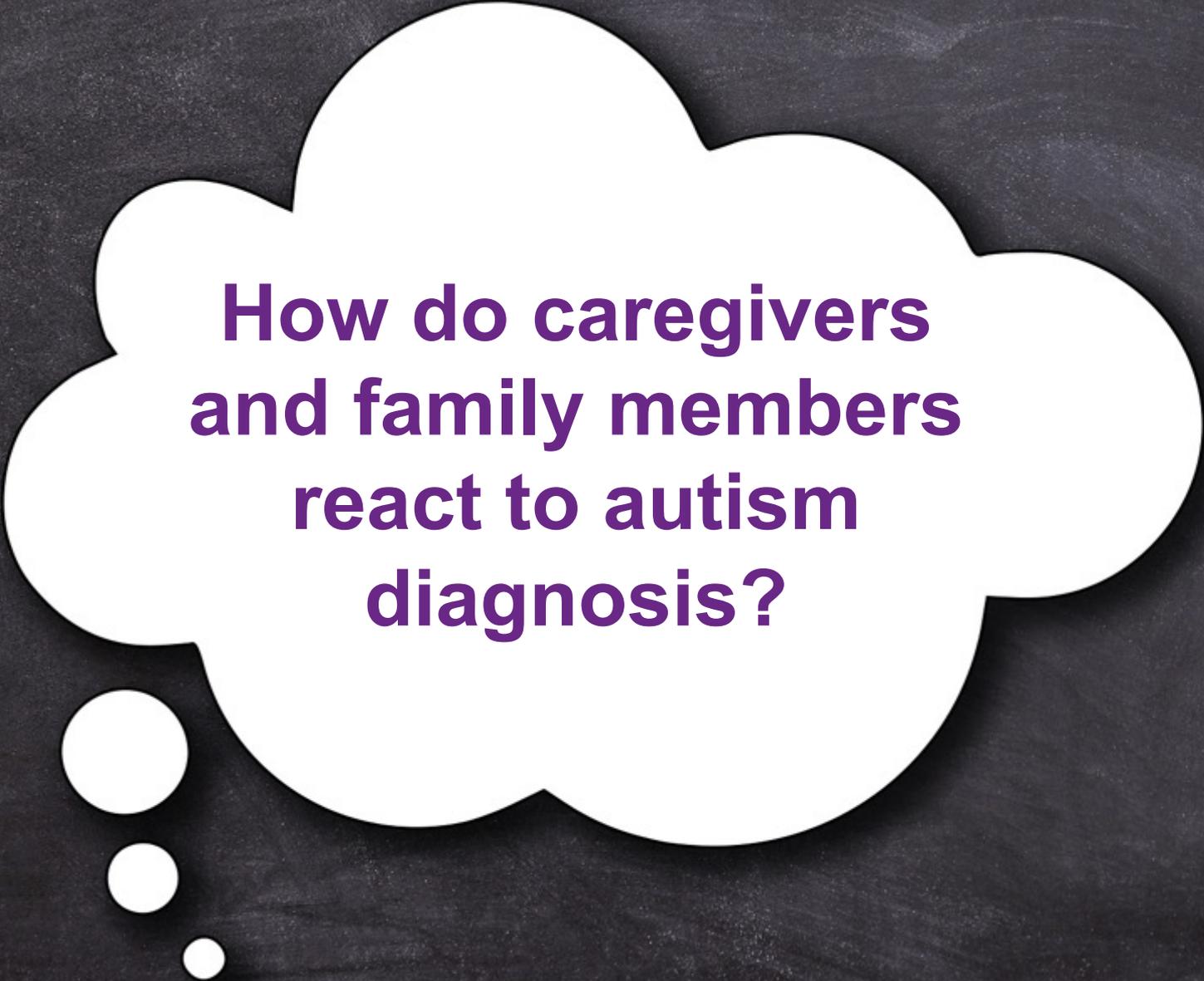
- **Caregivers:** Biological parents, adoptive parents, step-parents, foster parents, and other family members who are primary caregivers (e.g., grandparents)
- **Families:** Biological or non-biological, connected through culture, language, tradition, and shared experiences



# Supporting Caregivers and Families



- Every family is unique.
- Every family is a unit. What happens to one member, impacts all the other members too.
- Understanding and supporting the family unit is important in order to understand and support a child with autism.
- Appreciate, acknowledge, and celebrate each family's unique characteristics.



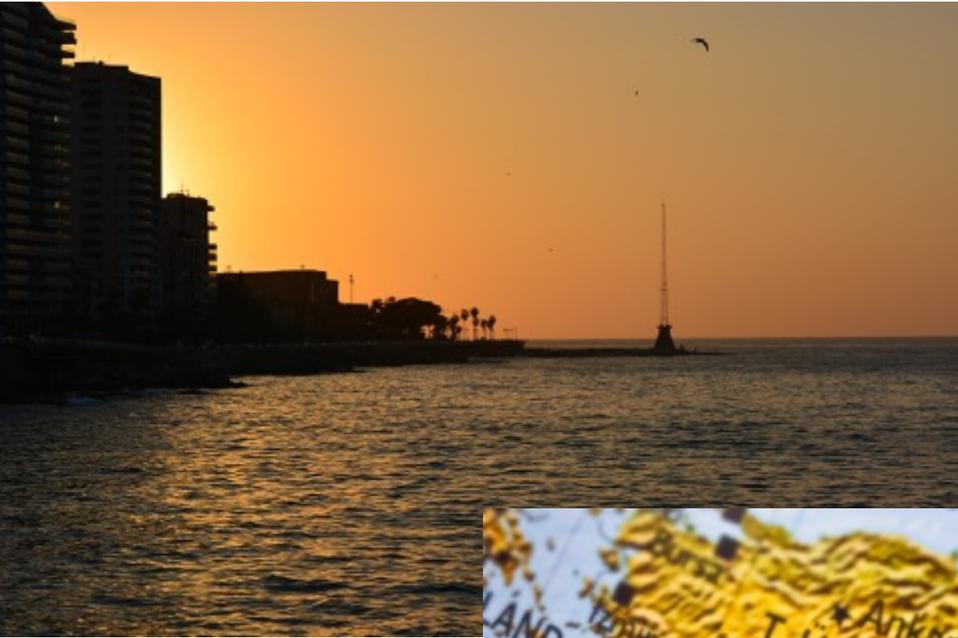
**How do caregivers  
and family members  
react to autism  
diagnosis?**

# Welcome to Holland by Emily Perl Kingsley



# Welcome to Beirut

by Susan F. Rzucidlo



Beirut, 1983 / Image from picryl.com, Public Domain





A large white thought bubble with a black outline is centered on a dark, textured background. Inside the bubble, the text "How can we support caregivers of newly diagnosed children with autism?" is written in a bold, purple font. Three smaller white circles of decreasing size are positioned to the left and bottom-left of the main bubble, suggesting a trail of thought.

**How can we support  
caregivers of newly  
diagnosed children with  
autism?**

# Role of Professionals

- Get to Know the Family
- Help Develop Priorities
- Share Community Resources
- Assist with Access and Navigation
- Inform with Good Information

There is a careful balance to strike between supporting the family **and** providing information.

# Supporting Caregivers

## Provide Information About:

- Autism
- IDEA law/ IFSP/ IEP
- Services and Treatments
- Their Rights and Responsibilities

## Connect to Other:

- Resources and Supports
- Professionals
- Families (e.g., support groups, support networks)

# Family-Centered Practices

## Family-Centered Practices:

- Treat families with dignity and respect
- Are individualized, flexible, and responsive to each family's unique circumstances
- Provide family members complete and unbiased information to make informed decisions
- Involve family members in acting on choices to strengthen child, caregiver, and family functioning

# Characteristics of Family-Centered Practices

- Respect personal and cultural beliefs and practices
- Provide complete and unbiased information to aid in informed decision making
- Responsive to unique life circumstances
- Reserve judgement of family choices and decisions
- Develop a plan in response to family concerns and priorities
- As families seek out resources and supports, professionals:
  - Work collaboratively with the family
  - Focus on family strengths and abilities
  - Provide guidance to the family



**How can we support  
siblings and other  
family members?**

# Summary

- The number of children diagnosed with autism continues to increase.
- Children can be diagnosed with autism as early as 2 years old.
- Early diagnosis is important.
- Each child and each family is unique.
- Find balance between supporting caregivers and family members and providing information.



# FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

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# Continuing Education Credits

## Continuing Education Credits or Certificates of Completion

- Require completion of evaluation and a post-test score of 80% or higher
- Emailed automatically within 24-48 hours
- May be sent to spam folder
  - Please check then email [MFLNFDEarlyIntervention@gmail.com](mailto:MFLNFDEarlyIntervention@gmail.com)

## CE Credits Offered for FDEI 2019 Series

- Behavior Analyst Certification Board credits
- State credits for individuals in Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming

For details about these credits, please visit  
[militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org/event/30358/](http://militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org/event/30358/)

# Continuing Education Credits

## For Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) Credits

- Must attend live webinar as an individual (no group log ins)
- Pass post-test within 24 hours of live event
- Provide BACB certification number when prompted on the post-test
- Can obtain **both** state credits **and** BACB credits through one evaluation and post-test link

## For State Credits or a Certificate of Completion

- Must attend live webinar (or view recording) and pass post-test within 1 year of live event
- Michigan and Wyoming participants must provide credential certification number as directed on the post-test
- Wyoming participants must complete all webinars in the 2019 FDEI series

# Evaluation and Post-Test Links

**For Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) Credits Use This Link:**

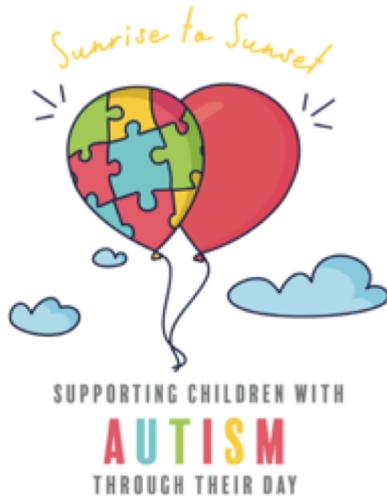
[https://vce.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_4Jf3i2RefM9k7kx](https://vce.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4Jf3i2RefM9k7kx)

**For State Credits or a Certificate of Completion Use This Link:**

[https://vce.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0IDgwFFQ8PUnJDT](https://vce.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0IDgwFFQ8PUnJDT)

Questions/concerns surrounding CE credit certificates can be emailed to this address: [MFLNFDEarlyIntervention@gmail.com](mailto:MFLNFDEarlyIntervention@gmail.com)

# FD Early Intervention Upcoming Event



**Yuck! I Don't Eat That! Nutrition & Selective Eating in Young Children with Autism**

**JUNE 12, 2019, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EASTERN**



For information about the MFLN FD Early Intervention Autism Series go to:  
<https://militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org/family-development/autism/>



# MILITARY FAMILIES LEARNING NETWORK

**Find all upcoming and recorded webinars covering:**

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Community Capacity Building  
Family Transitions  
Network Literacy  
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