



Enriching Lives

## A.C.T. NEWSLETTER

April 1, 2009

**April 1 - 30 is National Autism Awareness Month**—During April 2009, communities across the nation will observe National Autism Awareness Month. The month of April is a period to focus our awareness on a developmental disability that affects 1 in every 150 American children and approximately 1 in 94 boys.<sup>1</sup> This campaign is part of a national effort to increase public awareness and advocate for appropriate services for all individuals affected by autism.

Autism is a brain-based disorder that affects a person's behavior, social and communication skills. Autism is a complex developmental spectrum disorder that affects individuals differently and to varying degrees. It typically appears during the first three years of life. Currently, the Autism Society of America estimates that the lifetime expense of caring for a child with autism ranges from \$3.5 million to \$5 million, and that the United States is incurring nearly \$90 billion annually in expenditure for autism.<sup>2</sup>

Autism is a lifelong condition without a known cure. Nevertheless, children with autism can progress developmentally and learn new skills. The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly emphasizes the importance of early and continuous observation and screening for autism to ensure that children are identified and receive access to services as early as possible. The earlier autism is recognized, the sooner an intervention program can be implemented.<sup>3</sup> Studies indicate that early diagnosis and intervention lead to significantly improved outcomes. Listed below are signs to look for in children:

### Social Interaction:

- Little or no eye contact
- Lack of warm, joyful expressions
- Lack of sharing or interest in peer relationships
- Lack of response to name
- Lack of spontaneous or make-believe play

### Communication:

- Lack of showing gestures
- Lack of coordination of nonverbal communication
- Lack of or delay in spoken language
- Unusual prosody (little variation in pitch, odd intonation, irregular rhythm, unusual voice quality)

### Repetitive Behaviors and Restricted Interests

- Repetitive use of language and/or motor mannerisms (e.g., hand-flapping, twirling objects)
- Persistent fixation on parts of objects

A.C.T. is committed to raising awareness of all individuals affected by autism and the need for early identification and intervention. A.C.T. will provide free screenings for children to promote public education about autism during the annual observance. **For more information, please contact Dr. Drecun at [Dr.Drecun@a4ct.com](mailto:Dr.Drecun@a4ct.com) or (858) 792-3541.**

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control, 2007  
<sup>2</sup> Autism Society of America  
<sup>3</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics