

Johns Hopkins Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities Epidemiology



The Children's Health Act of 2000 directed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to establish regional centers for autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and other developmental disabilities (DDs). CDC is now funding **Centers for Autism and Developmental Disabilities Research and Epidemiology (CADDREs)** in California, Colorado, Maryland, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. In Georgia, CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at CDC leads the sixth CADDRE program. The three goals of these centers are to conduct center-initiated special studies, to design and conduct a multisite study of causes and risk factors for ASDs, and to disseminate findings to increase public health awareness. For information about CADDRE, please visit the CDC website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/caddre>.



The Johns Hopkins Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities Research and Epidemiology is the CADDRE site studying ASDs in Maryland. The areas in Maryland in the project are Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Cecil, Harford and Howard Counties. To achieve its goals, the center will conduct the following activities:

Study to Explore Early Development (SEED)

In this study, the center will work with other CADDRE programs to find causes of ASDs or factors that make it more likely that a child will have an ASD. Families who take part in SEED will answer survey questions and provide biological samples, children will be given developmental tests and physical examinations, and staff will look at medical records. Approximately 2700 children 2 through 5 years of age and their parents are expected to participate in this multisite study. Children with an ASD will be compared with a random sample of children from the general population, and a sample of children with other neurodevelopmental problems.

Special Studies

The center is interested in studying interactions between genetic and environmental factors and their roles in causing ASDs. Currently, the center is studying several candidate susceptibility genes using samples maintained by the Autism Genetics Research Exchange (AGRE). The Novel Circulating Biomarkers for Autism study will look at potential biological markers for autism and also serve as a pilot study for SEED. The center is also working with the Kennedy Krieger Institute in a pilot study to expand the institute's Baby Siblings project by recruiting women who are currently pregnant and already have a child diagnosed with autism. A grant from the National Institutes of Health is funding a pilot collaboration between the center and Peking University to determine how best to study ASD epidemiology in China.

Sharing Information

The center plans to share what is learned from these studies through mailings targeted to key audiences; news releases to the lay and professional media; sponsored symposia on ASDs; scientific publications; and the center's website, which includes information about ongoing activities and links to information for parents, educators, and clinicians, as well as links to resources for ASDs and other DDs.

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