A Snapshot of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Arizona

Findings from the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Surveillance Program (ADDSP) help increase understanding about the number of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), the characteristics of those children, and the age at which they are first evaluated and diagnosed.

1 in 63
Or 1.6% of 8-year-old children in an area of Arizona were identified with ASD by ADDSP in 2016

White children were 1.5x more likely
To be identified with ASD than Hispanic or black children

38% of children
Identified with ASD received a Comprehensive Developmental Evaluation by age 3 years

Boys were 4.2x More likely to be identified with ASD than girls

68% of children
Identified with ASD had a documented ASD diagnosis

IQ data available for 91%
Of children identified with ASD by ADDSP

By 57 months
Half of children identified with ASD were diagnosed

IQ = Intelligence Quotient
Intellectual disability = IQ < 70

25% had Intellectual Disability
What are the key take-away messages?

- More children with average or above-average intelligence are being identified with ASD since ADDSP began tracking in 2000.
- White children were more likely to be identified with ASD than black or Hispanic children. This may reflect cultural or socioeconomic and/or differences in access to diagnostic and therapeutic services.
- Although Hispanic children are less likely to be identified with ASD compared to non-Hispanic children in Arizona, this difference has been decreasing over the years.
- Differences between the percentage of boys and girls identified with ASD continue; a better understanding of sex differences may also lead to the development of more effective screening tools for ASD in boys and girls.

How can this information be useful?
ADDSP's latest findings can be used to:
- Promote early identification of ASD;
- Plan for the service needs of individuals with ASD and provide trainings related to ASD for healthcare providers and families;
- Guide ASD research;
- Inform policies that promote improved outcomes in health care and education for individuals with ASD;
- Identify cultural, educational, and economic barriers to decreasing the age of evaluation and diagnosis;
- Improve screening tools to increase accuracy of the screening test result for ASD;
- Improve collaborations across the ASD community among providers, researchers, and families; and
- Increase awareness of associated behavioral, cognitive, and/or physical features in children with autism.

Where was this information collected?
Information was collected from health and education records of children who were 8 years old and living in part of Maricopa County in metropolitan Phoenix in 2016.

8-year-old children in tracking area: 17,656
- 45% white
- 7% black
- 41% Hispanic
- 4% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 3% other

What else does ADDSP do?
ADDSP collaborates with the Arizona Department of Health Services and investigators from the University of Arizona to track the percentage and characteristics of 4-year-olds and 8-year-olds with ASD and/or intellectual disability. ADDSP also provides extensive ASD- and developmental disabilities-related outreach and training of students, parents, educators, and clinicians. Further, ADDSP data help guide ASD research in the public health community.

“CDC's ADDM Network provides a crucial understanding of the characteristics about the growing number of individuals identified with ASD in multiple areas of the United States. The information obtained by the Network has provided the data necessary to create collaborations with different providers who address the needs of the autism community across their lifespan.”

JENNIFER ANDREWS, PhD, University of Arizona

Resources

ARIZONA AUTISM COALITION
www.azautism.org

ARIZONA EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM
602-542-4446
https://des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-infant

AZ FIND
800-352-4558
www.azed.gov/special-education/az-find/

AZA UNITED
602-773-5773
www.azaunited.org/

CDC’S LEARN THE SIGNS. ACT EARLY.
Megan Wills
Arizona’s Act Early Ambassador
Mwills@blake.easterseals.com

RAISING SPECIAL KIDS
602-242-4366
www.raisingspecialkids.org/

SOUTHWEST AUTISM RESEARCH AND RESOURCE CENTER (SARRC)
602-340-8717
www.autismcenter.org

AUTISM SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN ARIZONA
520-770-1541
info@as-az.org

CONNECT WITH ADDSP
Sydney Pettygrove, PhD
Argelia Benavides, MPH
University of Arizona Health Sciences Center
sydneyp@arizona.edu
argeliab@email.arizona.edu

24