A Snapshot of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Colorado

Findings from the Colorado Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (CO-ADDM) Project 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 76
Or 1.3% of 8-year-old children in an area of Colorado were identified with ASD by the CO-ADDM Project in 2016.

White children and black children were 1.3 times and 1.5 times more likely, Respectively, to be identified with ASD than Hispanic children.

48% of children
Identified with ASD received a Comprehensive Developmental Evaluation by age 3 years.

67% of children
Identified with ASD had a documented ASD diagnosis.

IQ data available for 76%
Of children identified with ASD by the CO-ADDM Project

Boys were 4.5x More likely to be identified with ASD than girls.

IQ = Intelligence Quotient
Intellectual disability = IQ ≤ 70

Values indicate prevalence per 1,000 children. No significant differences in ASD prevalence were found between white and black children.

This percentage is lower than the average percentage identified with ASD (1.85%) in all communities in the United States where CDC tracked ASD in 2016.
What are the key take-away messages?
- Many children are living with ASD, and they need services and support, now and as they grow into adolescence and adulthood.
- Hispanic children are less likely to be identified with ASD than white or black children. Research does not show that being Hispanic makes a child less likely to develop ASD. This difference in identification may reflect cultural and/or socioeconomic differences, such as delayed or lack of access to services, as compared to other groups in Colorado.
- Evaluating and diagnosing all children with ASD as early as possible can help them be connected to the services they need.

How can this information be useful?
The CO-ADDM Project’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 future ASD research; and
- Inform policies promoting improved outcomes in health care and education for individuals with ASD.

Stakeholders in Colorado might consider different ways to:
- Lower the age of first evaluation by community providers; and
- Increase awareness of ASD among Hispanic families and identify and address barriers to evaluation and diagnosis in order to decrease the age at which Hispanic children are evaluated and diagnosed.

How and where was this information collected?
The CO-ADDM Project uses a record review method. Specifically, this information is based on the analysis of data collected from the health and some special education records of children who were 8 years old and living in one of seven counties in Colorado in 2016.

Tracking area
Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson counties

8-year-old children in tracking area: 40,874
- 54% white
- 7% black
- 34% Hispanic
- 5% Asian or Pacific Islander

What else does CO-ADDM do besides tracking ASD among 8-year-olds?
The CO-ADDM Project collaborates with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and JFK Partners at the University of Colorado-Denver to track the number and characteristics of 4-year-olds with ASD.

Resources
AUTISM SOCIETY OF COLORADO
Information and support for families/providers
720-214-0794
www.autismcolorado.org

COLORADO SITES OF AUTISM TREATMENT NETWORK
Services for children with ASD
www.jfkpartners.org
www.childrenscolorado.org

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION’S OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
Special education services for school-aged children with disabilities
www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped
Brooke Carson, Autism Specialist
303-866-6691
carson_b@cde.state.co.us

EARLY INTERVENTION COLORADO
Services for children under the age of 3 years with developmental delays or disabilities
1-888-777-4041
www.eicolorado.org/

FAMILY VOICES COLORADO
Support for parents of children with special needs
800-881-8272
www.familyvoicesco.org

LEARN THE SIGNS. ACT EARLY.
Resources for families and professionals on child development and what to do if there is a concern
Eileen Auer Bennet
Colorado’s Act Early Ambassador
eileen@coloradoabcd.org

THE ARC OF COLORADO
Support and advocacy for individuals with disabilities and their families
303-864-9354
www.thearcofco.org

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