A Snapshot of Autism Spectrum Disorder in North Carolina

The North Carolina Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (NC-ADDM) Project helps determine the number of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the central part of North Carolina, the characteristics of those children, and the age at which they are first evaluated and diagnosed.

1 in 39
Or 2.5% of 8-year-old children in central North Carolina were identified with ASD by the NC-ADDM Project in 2016

Black children were 1.4x More likely to be identified with ASD than Hispanic children

62% of children Identified with ASD received a Comprehensive Developmental Evaluation by age 3 years

57% of children Identified with ASD had a documented ASD diagnosis

IQ data available for 91% Of children identified with ASD by the NC-ADDM Project

IQ = Intelligence Quotient
Intellectual disability = IQ ≤ 70

By 38 months
Half of children identified with ASD were diagnosed

This percentage is higher 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 with ASD 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 in North Carolina. This may reflect cultural or socioeconomic factors that impact access to services compared to other groups in North Carolina.
• Among the areas where CDC tracks ASD across the United States, central North Carolina had the highest percentage of children identified with ASD who had received a comprehensive developmental evaluation by age 3 years. This is good news, but there is still more to be done to ensure that all children are evaluated as soon as concerns about their development are identified.
• Evaluating and diagnosing all children with ASD as early as possible can help them get connected to the services they need.

How can this information be useful?
The NC-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 North Carolina might consider different ways to 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?
This information is based on the analysis of data collected from the health and special education records of children who were 8 years old and living in one of four counties in central North Carolina in 2016.

Tracking area
Alamance, Chatham, Orange, and Wake counties

8-year-old children in tracking area: 19,291
• 55% white
• 21% black
• 17% Hispanic
• 7% Asian or Pacific Islander

What else does NC-ADDM do besides tracking ASD among 8-year-olds?
The NC-ADDM Project collaborates with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and investigators from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to track the number and characteristics of 4-year-olds and 8-year-olds with ASD and/or intellectual disability. The NC-ADDM Project works with the North Carolina Autism Alliance and other interdisciplinary partners to continually identify ways the data can help improve our understanding of the needs of families in North Carolina.