

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Findings from CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network show that the estimated percentage of children identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) remains high. About 1 in 68 or 1.5% of 8-year-old children were identified with ASD based on tracking across multiple areas of the United States. These findings indicate that there continue to be many children living with ASD who need services and support, now and as they grow into adolescence and adulthood. Knowing how many children have ASD is just part of the picture. Findings also show that more can be done to ensure that children are evaluated as soon as possible after developmental concerns are identified. We urge those who work with or on behalf of children—from healthcare providers to educators to community advocates—to join forces to ensure that all children with ASD are identified and connected to the services they need as early as possible.

## What is the purpose of this report?

This is the 6th Community Report from the ADDM Network, which tracks the number and characteristics of children with ASD and other developmental disabilities in diverse communities throughout the United States. The purpose of this Community Report is to highlight the ADDM Network's most recent scientific findings on ASD and empower those living in the ADDM Network communities—from public health agencies to healthcare organizations to school systems and beyond—to use these data for action.

## What are the key findings?

These findings are based on the analysis of information collected from the health and special education (if available) records of 8-year-old children who lived in areas of Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Utah, and Wisconsin in 2012.

- ✓ The estimated percentage of children identified with ASD remains high, but did not change significantly between 2010 and 2012.
- ✓ It is too soon to tell if the percentage of children identified with ASD over time is stabilizing.
- ✓ Children identified with ASD are not receiving comprehensive developmental evaluations as early as they could be.

- ✓ Black and Hispanic children are less likely to be identified with ASD. Those who are identified with ASD receive comprehensive developmental evaluations later than white children.
- ✓ Schools play a vital role in evaluating and serving children with ASD.

For a more in-depth look at the Key Findings, please go to page 9.

## Why is this information important and how can it be used?

For over a decade, CDC's ADDM Network has been at the forefront of documenting the changing number and characteristics of children with ASD. Findings from the ADDM Network have laid the foundation for research into who is likely to develop ASD, why ASD develops, and how best to support individuals, families, and communities affected by ASD. Service providers (such as healthcare organizations and school systems), researchers, and policymakers can use ADDM Network findings to support service planning, guide research on the factors that put a child at risk for ASD and which interventions can help, and inform policies that promote improved outcomes in health care and education. In particular, targeted strategies are needed to

1. Lower the age of first evaluation by community providers, and
2. Increase awareness of ASD among black and Hispanic families, and identify and address barriers in order to decrease the age at which black and Hispanic children are evaluated and diagnosed.

CDC will continue tracking the number and characteristics of children with ASD, researching what puts children at greater risk for ASD, and promoting early identification, the most powerful tool we have now for making a difference in the lives of children with ASD.

## NUMBER OF CHILDREN IDENTIFIED WITH ASD

