

# Alabama

## Tracking Autism Spectrum Disorder and Other Developmental Disabilities in Alabama:

### What You Need To Know

#### A Snapshot of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Alabama

The following estimates are based on information collected from the health and special education records of children who were 8 years old and living in one of nine counties in 2010 (see sidebar). Overall, the Alabama Autism Surveillance Program (AASP) identified 125 children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), including children with and without a diagnosis documented in their records.

#### How many children were identified with ASD?

**1 in 175** children (or 5.7 per 1,000 8-year-olds) was identified with ASD.

This estimate is lower than the average number of children identified with ASD (1 in 68) in all areas of the United States where CDC tracks ASD.

#### Which children were more likely to be identified with ASD?

Boys were almost 4 times more likely to be identified with ASD than girls.

- ❑ 1 in 114 boys was identified with ASD.
- ❑ 1 in 417 girls was identified with ASD.

White and black children were more likely to be identified with ASD than Hispanic children<sup>1</sup>.

- ❑ 1 in 161 white children was identified with ASD.
- ❑ 1 in 189 black children was identified with ASD.

#### When were children first evaluated for developmental concerns?

53% of children identified with ASD were evaluated for developmental concerns by the time they were 3 years old.

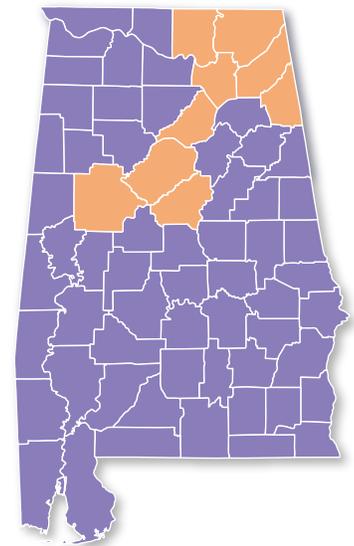
#### When were children first diagnosed with ASD by a community provider??

On average, children were diagnosed at age 4 years and 7 months, even though children can be diagnosed as early as age 2 years. When looking at age of first diagnosis by subtype, on average, children were diagnosed with:

- ❑ Autistic disorder at age 4 years and 3 months.
- ❑ Pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) at age 4 years and 5 months.
- ❑ Asperger disorder at age 6 years and 1 month.

#### How many children had an eligibility for autism special education services at school or had an ASD diagnosis?

76% of children either had an eligibility for autism special education services at school or had an ASD diagnosis. The remaining 24% of children identified with ASD had documented symptoms of ASD, but had not yet been classified as having ASD by a community provider.



#### Site Information

Tracking area: Blount, Cherokee, DeKalb, Jackson, Jefferson, Madison, Marshall, Shelby, and Tuscaloosa counties (area covered by education sources was smaller than area covered by health sources)

Children in tracking area: 21,833 8-year-old children, of whom about 59% were white, 31% were black, 8% were Hispanic, and 2% were Asian or Pacific Islander



More is understood about ASD than ever before,  
but there is an urgent need to continue the search for  
answers and provide help for people living with ASD.

### **Public Health Action**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funds programs to track the number and characteristics of children with ASD and other developmental disabilities, as part of the CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network. The Alabama Autism Surveillance Program (AASP) was established in 2002 as an ADDM Network site in collaboration with the Alabama Department of Public Health and investigators from Department of Health Care Organization and Policy in the School of Public Health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. AASP partners with the Autism Society of Alabama, the Alabama State Department of Education, and many other state and local agencies and organizations that serve children with developmental disabilities and their families to track the number of 8-year-old children with ASD or cerebral palsy, or both, living in select areas of Alabama. This program also contributes information on the characteristics of children with ASD and on factors that put children at risk for this condition. AASP data are important to promote early identification, plan for training and service needs, guide research, and inform policy so that children and families in our community get the help they need.

### **Training and Education**

AASP's education and outreach efforts focus on awareness events for ASD and cerebral palsy, training sessions for professionals and families regarding access to ASD resources, and detailed presentations on data from AASP and the ADDM Network. This outreach is designed to inform state and local partners about ASD in a manner that supports ASD service and systems building in our state. Education and outreach are conducted in partnership with the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC), the Autism Society of Alabama (ASA) and other partners. Through our partnership with ASA, AASP staff members provide workshops and trainings for parents, teachers, and primary care providers to promote early recognition of ASD signs, to enhance our providers' capacity to identify and diagnose ASD, and to improve our system of care for children with ASD and their families.

#### **For more information about AASP, please contact:**

Martha Wingate, DrPH  
University of Alabama at Birmingham  
School of Public Health,  
1665 University Boulevard,  
RPHB 320  
Birmingham, AL 35294  
Phone: 205-934-6783  
E-mail: [mshay@uab.edu](mailto:mshay@uab.edu)

#### **Access Resources and Help Connect Families to Services and Supports in Alabama**

##### **Alabama's Early Intervention System**

Phone: 1-800-543-3098

Web: [www.rehab.alabama.gov/ei](http://www.rehab.alabama.gov/ei)

##### **Alabama State Department of Education**

Phone: 334-242-8114

Web: [www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu)

##### **Autism Society of Alabama**

Web: [www.autism-alabama.org](http://www.autism-alabama.org)

##### **Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council**

Phone: 205-478-3402

E-mail: [anna.mcconnell@mh.alabama.gov](mailto:anna.mcconnell@mh.alabama.gov)

Web: [www.autism.alabama.gov](http://www.autism.alabama.gov)

##### **Glenwood Autism and Behavioral Health Center**

Web: <http://glenwood.org/>

##### **Learn the Signs. Act Early.**

Anna McConnell, Alabama's Act  
Early Ambassador

Phone: 205-478-3402

E-mail: [anna.mcconnell@mh.alabama.gov](mailto:anna.mcconnell@mh.alabama.gov)

Web: [www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly)

Web: [www.uab.edu/civitansparkspk/act-early-alabama](http://www.uab.edu/civitansparkspk/act-early-alabama)

<sup>1</sup> Due to small numbers of children, we are unable to detect statistical differences between certain racial and ethnic groups.

<sup>2</sup> This information is based on children who had a diagnosis from a community provider documented in their records. Because the diagnoses were made in 2010 or earlier, they reflect DSM-IV-TR subtypes. This excludes children whose only ASD classification was an ICD-9 billing code or an eligibility for autism special education services.