

**ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
DEFINITION AND RECOMMENDED ELIGIBILITY
CRITERIA FOR AUTISM**

Definition {from 23 Illinois Administrative Code 226.75 Subtitle A Subchapter f }

Autism: A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child had an emotional disturbance.

Recommended Eligibility Criteria:

The eligibility for special education and related services appropriated for students with autism shall be determined by the presence of at least two (2) behaviors from group A, one (1) behavior from Group B, and one (1) behavior from Group C. Consider a criterion to be met only if the behavior is abnormal for the person's developmental level and is not caused by some other disability.

Group A: Reciprocal Social Interaction

(The following are arranged so that those listed first are more likely to apply to younger or more disabled, and the latter ones to older or less disabled, persons with autism.)

- marked lack of awareness of the existence or feelings of others (e.g., treats a person as if he or she were a piece of furniture, toddler does not follow mother around house, does not notice another person's distress, intrudes on others' privacy without realizing it);
- absent or abnormal seeking of comfort at times of distress (e.g., does not come for comfort even when ill, hurt, or tired; seeks comfort in a stereotyped way, such as always wanting a bandage to be applied when in pain regardless of the cause);
- absent or impaired imitation (e.g., does not wave bye-bye, does not copy mother's domestic activities, mechanically imitates others' actions out of context);
- absent or abnormal social play (e.g., does not actively participate in simple games prefers solitary play activities, involves others children in play only as mechanical aids");
- gross impairment in ability make peer friendships (e.g., has no interest in making friend; demonstrates lack of understanding of conventions of social interactions, for example, inviting children home but then disappearing to own room).

Group B: Qualitative Impairment of Communication, Language and Symbolic Development

(The following are arranged so that those listed first are more likely to apply to younger or more disabled, and the latter ones to older or less disabled, person with autism.)

- no mode of communication, such as communicative babbling, pointing at objects with eyes, facial expression, gesture, mime, or spoken language;
- markedly abnormal nonverbal communication, as in the use of eye-to eye gaze, facial expression, body posture, echopraxia, or gestures to initiate or modulate social interaction (e.g., does not anticipate being held, stiffens when held, does not look or smile when making a social approach, does not greet parents, or visitors, has a fixed stare in social situations);
- absence of imaginative activity, such as play-acting or adult roles, fantasy characters, or animals; lack of interest in stories or imaginary events;
- marked abnormalities in the production of speech, including volume, pitch, stress, rate, rhythm, and intonation (e.g., monotonous tone, questions-like melody, or high pitch);
- marked abnormalities in the form or content of speech, including stereotyped and repetitive use of speech (e.g., immediate echolalia or mechanical repetition of television commercial); use of “you” when “I” is meant (e.g., using “you want cookie?” to mean “I want a cookie”); or idiosyncratic use of words or phrases (e.g., “Go to green riding” to mean “I want to go on the swing”);
- marked impairment in the ability to initiate or sustain a conversation with others despite adequate speech (e.g., indulging in lengthy monologues on one subject regardless of interjections from others).

Group C: Markedly Restricted Repertoire of Activities and Interests as manifested by the following:

- stereotyped body movements (e.g., hand-flicking or twisting, spinning, head-banging, rocking or complex whole-body movements);
- persistent preoccupation with parts of objects (e.g., sniffing or smelling objects, repetitive feeling of texture of materials, spinning wheels of toy cars) or attachment to unusual objects (e.g., insisting on carrying around string);
- marked distress over changes in trivial aspects of environment (e.g., when a vase is moved from usual position);

- unreasonable insistence on following routines in precise detail (e.g., insisting that the same route always be followed when shopping);
- markedly restricted range of interests and a preoccupation with one narrow interest (e.g., interested only in winding up objects, in amassing information about meteorology, or in pretending to be a fantasy character).

