# Academic Libraries and Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) How Do We Help?

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## Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Characteristics

- Developmental disorder
- Persistent deficits in social communication and interaction
- Restrictive, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities
- Intellectual impairment (e.g., trouble with thinking, reasoning, or abstract concepts)
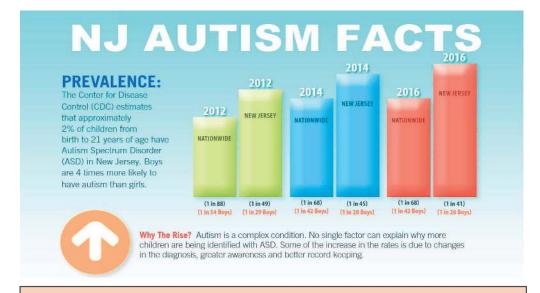- Language delays, or lack of language entirely



Tulane Public Relations (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Library_(3639472190).jpg#filelinks), „Library (3639472190)", size by Seton Hall University Libraries, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/legalcode

## ASD Student Snapshot

**Strengths**
- Strong memory
- Original and creative thought patterns
- Good attention to detail
- Single minded and determined nature

**Weaknesses**
- Understanding abstract or ambiguous concepts
- Expressing thoughts in writing
- Poor organizational and time management skills
- May be prone to loneliness, anxiety, depression



**NJ AUTISM FACTS**

**PREVALENCE:** The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that approximately 2% of children from birth to 21 years of age have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in New Jersey. Boys are 4 times more likely to have autism than girls.

2012 NATIONWIDE — (1 in 88) (1 in 54 Boys)
2012 NEW JERSEY — (1 in 49) (1 in 29 Boys)
2014 NATIONWIDE — (1 in 68) (1 in 42 Boys)
2014 NEW JERSEY — (1 in 45) (1 in 28 Boys)
2016 NATIONWIDE — (1 in 68) (1 in 42 Boys)
2016 NEW JERSEY — (1 in 41) (1 in 26 Boys)

**Why The Rise?** Autism is a complex condition. No single factor can explain why more children are being identified with ASD. Some of the increase in the rates is due to changes in the diagnosis, greater awareness and better record keeping.

## ASD Goes To College — Challenges We Face

- An estimated 1 in 68 children nationally and 1 in 41 in New Jersey has ASD (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Increasing number of students with ASD will enroll in higher education—50,000 teenagers with ASD turn 18 each year and nearly 35% attend college (Shattuck et al., 2012)
- Heightened risk for academic failure during college years (Pinder-Amaker, 2014)
- Current services do not address supports needed to help college students with ASD (Ashbaugh, Koegel, & Koegel, 2017)
- ASD characteristics often do not manifest themselves in observable, physical ways, and many students choose not to disclose an ASD condition (Remy & Seaman, 2014)

## ASD Goes To College — NJ

**Rutgers**
- The Douglas Developmental Disabilities Center http://dddc.rutgers.edu/
- Center for Adult Autism Services http://rcaas.rutgers.edu/
- The Autism Spectrum College Support Program https://is.gd/zsQIsm

**Bergen Community College / College of New Jersey**
→ TPSID* grant winners from Dept. of Education https://is.gd/TcAPkJ

*Transition Program for Students with Intellectual Disabilities*

## What Can Libraries Do?

- Personal librarian program for students with ASD (Remy & Seaman, 2014)
- ASD Awareness Training for librarians, staff, and students
- Outreach initiatives (e.g., Autism Awareness events in April)
- Provide opportunities for students with ASD to participate informally in groups (Anderson, 2018)
- Transparent signage directing students to quiet areas (Anderson, 2018)
- Summer transition program including the library (Pinder-Amaker, 2014)
- Promote the Library as a "safe place" (Lawrence, 2013)
- Create ASD-friendly environments (e.g. non-fluorescent lighting, visual signage)
- Offer chat reference services
- Autism Resource Libguide (e.g. Florida State University http://med-fsu.libguides.com/autism)
- Understanding ASD students and their challenges will lead to a better library experience both for students and librarians (Anderson, 2018)

## Additional Resources

- Universal Design for Learning http://www.udlcenter.org/
- Libraries and Autism: We're Connected http://www.librariesandautism.org/
- Project Enable https://projectenable.syr.edu/
- Autism NJ https://www.autismnj.org/
- Autism Speaks NJ https://is.gd/iIVGHE
- NJ Dept. Of Health—Autism http://nj.gov/health/fhs/autism/
- NJ Dept. Of Education—Autism http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/autism/

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