

WHAT IS AUTISM?



Legal Definition from IDEA 2004 Regulations (34 C. F. R. 300.8(c)(1)):

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/a/300.8/c/1>

- (i) Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational 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.
- (ii) Autism does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance, as defined in paragraph (c)(4) of this section.
- (iii) A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age three could be identified as having autism if the criteria in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section are satisfied.

Paraphrase of Legal Definition (using 500 most common words in English)

Autism: Children with autism talk and listen in a way that is very different than we may think they should. This often begins before they are 3 years old and lasts for many years. Children with autism also seem different in the way they play with or talk to other children. They may act differently than other people think they will. If this makes it hard for them to learn or be part of their school, they might need help.

Key Words that describe disability-related concerns:

Communication: Talking, listening, reading, writing



Social Interaction: Playing with other children; talking to other people; actions with other people.

