

Autism Program

Clinical Services, Research, Community Education and Outreach Highlights

Clinical Services

Children's Specialized Hospital (CSH), an RWJBarnabas Health facility, is the nation's leading provider of inpatient and outpatient care for children from birth to 21 years of age facing special health challenges – from chronic illnesses and complex physical disabilities like brain and spinal cord injuries, to a full scope of developmental, behavioral, and mental health concerns. At 14 different New Jersey locations, our pediatric specialists partner with families to make our many innovative therapies and medical treatments more personalized and effective so each child can reach their full potential.

The Autism Program at CSH is dedicated to improving the lives of children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and their families by providing comprehensive evaluations, treatment, community education and research. As the largest regional provider of services for children with ASD, we are focused on early identification and treatment. Since our highly qualified staff is committed to family-centered care, professionals and families work together as partners in making sure that children get the services they need.

In collaboration with Rutgers University and the Rutgers University Center for Autism Research, Education, and Services (RUCARES) at the Brain Health Institute (BHI), CSH RUCARES provides two leading, intensive programs located in Somerset, NJ, dedicated to innovative research, education, and services. The CSH RUCARES Severe Behavior Program provides specialized services to children and adolescents with autism and other developmental disabilities who display dangerous behavior such as self-injury, aggression, property destruction, and pica. The CSH RUCARES Intensive Feeding Program uses a goal-oriented and scientifically supported approach based on the principles and procedures of applied behavior analysis (ABA) and is intended for infants, children and adolescents who have not made progress in outpatient feeding therapy at CSH or elsewhere.



Autism Research Studies Actively Recruiting

- **IMPRESSIVE**

Scientists are seeking young adults (ages 16-24) with and without autism to be in a study to understand how job interviews affect obtaining employment. If you qualify, you will be asked to participate in an all remote (virtual) study and you will be compensated for your time. For additional details, contact hgenova@kesslerfoundation.org.

- **Examination of Emotional Processing in Children with Traumatic Brain Injury or Autism(ages 7-18)**

This is an exploratory study to learn how children with a brain injury or autism perceive the emotions of others. For additional details, contact Lauren Hendrix at lhendrix@kesslerfoundation.org or 973-324-8384.

- **FunConn: Exploring the Brain's Role in Symptoms of Autism (ages 5-18)**

Two-study visits will be conducted at the Kessler Foundation sites in East Hanover and West Orange. The study involves paper and pencil tasks that look at different brain functions and one brain scan (MRI). The brain scan does not involve any medications or radiation, and no contrast dyes or injections will be used for the MRI. Children who complete the brain scan will be compensated up to \$200 (in Visa gift cards) for their participation. For additional information, contact Michael Dacanay at mdacanay@kesslerfoundation.org.

- **SPARK**

The Simons Foundation Powering Autism Research for Knowledge (SPARK) is the largest autism research study ever. It aims to recruit, engage, and retain a community of 50,000 individuals with autism and their family members living in the U.S. The study can all be done online at home and involves completing surveys and submitting a saliva sample to help better understand autism. Participants are eligible for a gift card. For more information, call 908-301-5958 or visit [SPARK for Autism](#)

- **Will interactive acoustic experience optimize rapid auditory processing and pre-linguistic acoustic mapping critical to later language in infants at familial risk for autism? (age 4 months)**

Experience with sound cues may strengthen abilities important for language in infants at familial risk for autism. The infancy studies laboratory (ISL) at Rutgers-Newark is inviting siblings of children with autism to participate in an interactive, baby-friendly game that encourages them to discriminate between brief sounds that become increasingly faster and more complex. The study begins at age 4 months and compensation up to \$400.00 will be provided for study completion. For additional information, contact babylab@newark.rutgers.edu or visit the ISL website at [Infancy Studies Laboratory](#)

- **Additional research opportunities in autism are available on the NJ Autism Center for Excellence website**

[NJ Autism Center for Excellence](#)



Community Outreach

Early Developmental Screening Program

This model program provides free developmental screening for children ages 11 to 66 months, in English or Spanish, in order to improve early access to care. Screenings are now conducted virtually, by video or phone. Each screening takes approximately 30 minutes and includes an interactive questionnaire and conversation between parent(s), child and CSH staff. Families also receive valuable resources about early childhood development. View this [CSH Early Developmental Screening](#) video for more information. To register, call 908-301-5498.

Community-based Education

- **Real Life Tips for Kids with Autism**

This series of videos, tip sheets, and topic-specific visual aids covers many of the topics that are of concern to parents who have a child with autism. These resources cover the basics as well as toileting, feeding, sibling relationships, social skills, sensory challenges, hygiene, play dates, and much more. The tip sheets also include lists of more resources on each topic. [Real Life Tips for Kids with Autism](#)

- **Friends Like You. Friends Like Me.**

This resource is designed to help educate children about autism spectrum disorder and provide the tools necessary to facilitate friendships among children. The educational film, program guide, friendship booklet, and supplemental resources encourage recognition of children's similarities, reinforce the common desire to be accepted and have friends, demystify autism in an age-appropriate manner, and promote inclusion, respect, and friendship between children of all abilities in all facets of their lives. These materials and resources encourage understanding and acceptance and help to reduce intimidation and bullying. [Friends Like You. Friends Like Me.](#)

- **Autism and Safety – It's Unpredictable**

Children's Specialized Hospital has developed tools and resources to support the safety of children with ASD. The hospital educates community members with comprehensive information including wandering, bullying/abuse, fire safety, transportation issues, safeguards and prevention and many more safety issues within the school, home, and the community. Ongoing education programs have been made to school personnel, emergency responders, law enforcement, juvenile firesetter prevention, disaster response crisis counselors, afterschool providers, recreation providers, juvenile detention staff, healthcare providers, school resource officers and more. Resources include:

- o Family Autism Safety Handbook
- o 911 Means Emergency
- o Emergency information sheet for people with ASD
- o Providing safety information to 911 dispatch centers
- o Signs for safety
- o "I Have Autism" safety cards/safety identification cards
- o Safety picture stories and template
- .. and more

[Autism and Safety – It's Unpredictable](#)



Parent and Caregiver Support

CSH provides **free workshops** for parents/caregivers of children newly diagnosed with ASD. Workshops are provided in English and in Spanish. Participants do not need to be patients of CSH. Call Sandra Johnson, ASD Social Worker at 908-301-5944 for more information. The following are the upcoming workshops:

- **The Parent Panel: An Empowering Discussion for Caregivers and Advocates of Individuals with Special Health Care Needs**
English session: Tuesday, April 6, 2021 6:30pm to 8:00pm [Parent Panel – English](#)
Spanish session: Jueves, 15 de Abril de 2021, de 6:30pm a 8:00pm [Diálogo de los padres: Vamos a tener una charla con otros padres – español](#)
- **Navigating Special Education**
English session: Tuesday, April 13, 2021 6:30pm to 8:00pm [Navigating Special Education – English](#)
Spanish session: Jueves 27 de Mayo de 2021, de 6:30pm a 8:00pm [Derechos Basicos En Educacion Especial - español](#)
- **Overview of Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis**
English session: Tuesday, April 20, 2021 6:30pm to 8:00pm [Overview of Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis](#)
Spanish session: Martes 27 de Abril de 2021, de 6:30pm a 8:00pm [Una Descripción General del Trastorno del Espectro Autista - espanol](#)
- **Ask the Therapists: Psychologist, Speech, and Occupational Therapists**
English Session: Thursday, May 6, 2021 6:30pm to 8:00pm [Ask the Therapists – English](#)
Spanish session: Jueves 13 de Mayo de 2021, de 6:30pm a 8:00pm Consulte a los terapeutas: [Psicólogos, terapeutas del habla y terapeutas ocupacionales - español](#)

Quarterly, **free support groups** geared for parents/caregivers of children newly diagnosed with ASD are conducted in English and Spanish. Participants do not need to be patients of CSH. Call Sandra Johnson, ASD Social Worker at 908-301-5944 for more information.

Recreation

CSH provides a wide variety of recreation activities and camps for children and adolescents with ASD or other special health care needs. For more information, visit www.childrens-specialized.org/recreation.

