



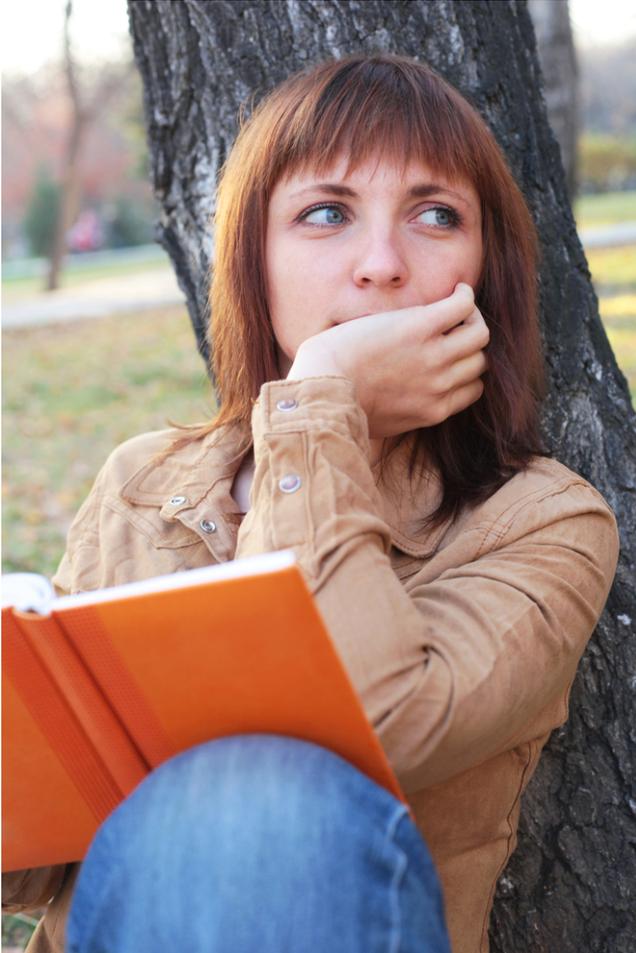
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## **Adults Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Available Resources.**

By: [Abbey Herringshaw, Karina G. Campos, Psy.D., & Suzi Naguib, Psy.D.](#) Nov. 2011



*Andrea is a 20-year old young adult who has recently been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Andrea's parents always knew she was "different," however, given that she did well academically, they always remained hopeful that in time, her social development would catch up. As a child, Andrea's language developed within normal limits. She spoke her first words at 12 months and began putting words together at approximately 24 months. She did not engage in imaginative play but enjoyed playing with Legos and puzzles. She was not very interested in interacting with other children when younger and has never had a close friend. Her difficulty engaging in reciprocal conversation and her intense interest in science fiction literature and movies made it hard for her to connect with her peers. She was also frequently teased at school. Upon completing high school, Andrea's parents enrolled her at their local community college because they were concerned about her ability to function independently in a larger university environment. Andrea stopped attending classes after her first semester as she became overwhelmed with the social and organizational demands placed on her. This experience is what prompted her family to seek an evaluation.*

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) include Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder as well as Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified. These disorders are life-long and are characterized by impairments in communication and social interaction that can have a significant impact on an individual's ability to meet the demands of daily life.

Although, receiving a diagnosis can be difficult for many, for some individuals when diagnosed as adults, a diagnosis can provide enormous comfort. Identifying and developing a better understanding of one's difficulties enables one to seek appropriate treatment, resources and [support](#). In this blog, we aim to provide a starting point for individuals who are interested in learning more about available resources for adults with ASD.

## **Social Security Benefits**

According to the [social security disability website](#), an adult with a documented diagnosis of ASD who is not earning more than \$1,000 per month through independent employment may qualify for certain social security benefits. This may include Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability (SSD) Insurance. Alternatively, an adult who was diagnosed with ASD prior to age 22, may qualify for Disabled Adult Children benefits depending on parental earnings. Eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis, and therefore, other factors may influence one's eligibility. For more information regarding these benefits visit your [local social security office](#) as well as [Social Security Online](#).



## **Medicaid**

Medicaid is a government operated health insurance program designed to cover individuals' health care needs. There are several Medicaid programs in Michigan for which adults with ASD may qualify. Medicaid Package, Comprehensive Medicaid Package and [Michigan's Habilitation and Supports waiver](#) are among these programs. The [Department of Community Health \(DCH\)](#) provides additional information regarding Medicaid eligibility and programming for adults, and the [Michigan DCH](#) provides information about Medicaid Health Plans by county.

## **Job Accommodations**

The [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) was passed in 1990. This act states that employers must not discriminate in their hiring based on the existence of disabilities, and must also provide employees with reasonable accommodations.

Adults with ASD may experience a number of difficulties in the workplace, some of which may relate to social demands and others to certain aspects of the work environment. Examples of [accommodations](#) that may be helpful to some individuals include requesting that the majority of work be provided in a visual format (e.g., writing) rather than only verbally in order to increase clarity of expectations. When certain work related responsibilities cause significant distress due to an individual's disability, it is reasonable to inquire if those responsibilities are critical to one's position or if they can be eliminated or significantly reduced. The workplace environment can also present unique challenges for an individual with ASD who may be particularly sensitive to auditory or visual stimuli. Inquiring about wearing noise-cancelling headphones as well as moving to a quieter workspace may be helpful. If necessary, individuals may also ask for a job coach who can provide support throughout the day. The [Autism Spectrum Disorders on the Job Accommodation Network](#) provides additional information regarding work accommodations for individuals with ASD.

## **Vocational Programs**

Vocational programs assist individuals in developing employment goals and plans, job placement as well as job maintenance through follow-up visits. State run programs are available at no-fee for individuals with disabilities; [Michigan Rehabilitation Services \(MRS\)](#) is an example of such a program. Additional information regarding vocational programs are also available in the [City of Troy Disabilities Resource Guide](#).

Individuals with ASD who are experiencing difficulty with their current employment due to changes in their job description, or who have had difficulty applying for and securing a job are encouraged to seek vocational support.

### **Housing**

While some adults with ASD are able to live independently with little or no assistance, others require more support. Some adults chose to live with family members, while others may desire more independence and may choose to seek the assistance of agencies that offer a variety of options for adults to overcome some of the barriers to independent living. Some agencies provide services such as help with locating affordable housing developments or finding appropriate roommates. These agencies can also help an individual identify supportive living communities where assistance with daily tasks can be provided. Support ranges depending on individual need. This may include having someone on call when needed, to having an in home assistant 24 hours a day supporting with such tasks as completing chores, budget planning, transportation, medical care, counseling as well as helping organize social outings. Some helpful resources for housing assistance include: [Community Housing Network](#) , [autismsource.org](http://autismsource.org) and [Disability Network – Michigan](#).

### **Advocacy Groups**

In addition to the resources listed above, adults with ASD may want to become involved in advocacy groups. Advocacy groups promote equality and general well being for individuals with disabilities including ASD. Advocacy group goals range from providing leadership and promoting awareness to influencing policy makers, as well as helping to lobby against organizations that have treated individuals with disabilities unfairly. Some helpful advocacy resources include [The Arc](#), the [Autism Advocacy and Law Center](#) and the [Autism Self Advocacy Network](#).

For more information about Sunfield Center for Autism, ADHD and Behavioral Health, and our [Autism Spectrum Disorders Service](#), please visit our website at [sunfieldcenter.com](http://sunfieldcenter.com) or call us at (734) 222-9277.