



BERMUDA AUTISM SUPPORT & EDUCATION

## MEDIA FACTSHEET

### Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

**Definition** – Autism is a complex developmental disorder that affects the way a person perceives the world and makes communication and social interaction difficult. There may also be accompanying repetitive behaviors and intense interests. Autism is often referred to as a "spectrum disorder," meaning that its symptoms and characteristics can present themselves in a variety of combinations, ranging from mild to quite severe.

**Incidence and Prevalence** – What was once viewed as a rare disorder is now recognized as the most common developmental disability affecting children. It is estimated that one in every 110 children is diagnosed with autism, making it more common than childhood cancer, juvenile diabetes and pediatric AIDS combined. Prevalence rate of autism is increasing 10-17 percent annually. Possible reasons for this increase include improved diagnosis and environmental influences.

**Causes** - The exact cause or causes of autism is/are still not known, but research shows that genetic (hereditary) factors are important. It is also evident from research that autism may be associated with a variety of conditions affecting brain development which occur before, during, or very soon after birth.

**Diagnosis & Treatment** - The earlier a diagnosis of autism is made, the better the chances are of a person receiving appropriate help and support. There is no known cure for ASD, but effective, structured intervention that combines education, support and training can really make a difference to the life of a person with autism, helping the person to maximize their skills and achieve their full potential.

### Bermuda Autism Support and Education (BASE)

BASE is a community-based, nonprofit organization that provides autism related information, referral, advocacy, training, and support to families, professionals, and community members. BASE strives to increase public awareness of autism and help to ensure that individuals on the autism spectrum are given opportunities and resources to achieve their full potential. BASE was formed in February 2001 by a group of parents seeking more information and education about autism.

With the assistance of a full-time autism consultant, BASE offers the following services:

- Assessment for early indicators of autism
- Information and referral for autism services in Bermuda
- Parent support and training
- Home and school consultation
- Community education for educators, health professionals, and other interested individuals
- Advocacy on behalf of individuals with autism and their families
- Information and reference materials on autism