

physical, intellectual, and psychosocial growth. Although such children often achieve the usual motor milestones, their rate of development is slower. These children learn communication only with specialized training. **Finger spelling** is one desirable method often taught to these children. Words are spelled letter by letter into the hearing–visually impaired child's hand, and the child spells into the other person's hand. Some children with residual hearing or visual impairment can learn to speak. Whenever possible, encourage speech because it allows communication with other individuals.

The future prospects for hearing and visually impaired children are, at best, unpredictable. Congenital hearing and visual impairment are accompanied by other physical or neurologic problems, which further diminish the child's learning potential. The most favorable prognosis is for children who have acquired hearing and visual impairments with few, if any, associated disabilities. Their learning capacity is greatly potentiated by their developmental progress before the sensory impairments. Although total independence, including gainful vocational training, is the goal, some children with hearing–visual impairment are unable to develop to this level. They may require lifelong parental or residential care. The nurse working with such families helps them deal with future goals for the child, including possible alternatives to home care during the parents' advancing years.

Communication Impairment

Autism Spectrum Disorders

ASDs are complex neurodevelopmental disorders of unknown etiology. The *APA Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) revised the definition for ASD based on two behavior domains that include difficulties in social communication and social interaction, and unusually restricted, repetitive behavior, interest or activities ([American Psychiatric Association, 2013](#); [Brentani, Paula, Bordini, et al, 2013](#); [Lai, Lombardo, and Baron-Cohen, 2014](#)).

ASD is now frequently diagnosed in toddlers because their atypical development is being recognized early ([Lai, Lombardo,](#)