

ASD Care Planning

There is no definite agreement on what causes Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Scientists believe genetic and environmental (such as viruses or infections) factors may be to blame, though there's no complete consensus on that. Disorders on the spectrum can share a lot of the same symptoms and behaviors, but differ on when the behaviors start, how severe they are, and patterns of problems, and so can be difficult to diagnose and treat.⁴

Providers should help families identify school-based support and private therapy options, like speech therapy, Medicaid access, Applied Behavior Analysis, possibly genetic testing, and whether medication is necessary¹, but not all providers are versed in ASD, not all options are affordable, and schools can offer help at varying degrees of quality. Parents are often left on their own to develop and manage their child's therapy, and care planning. The best care plans are developed specifically for each child, tailored to their strengths and weaknesses.¹ Managing these care plans takes meticulous scheduling and routine that often becomes a full-time job.

The Autism Society of America estimates that the lifetime cost of caring for a child with an autism spectrum disorder averages at \$2.4 million, whereas the estimated cost of raising a child without ASD is around \$1.4 million.^{4,5} Parents typically end up earning 21% less than parents with children who have no continual health limitations,⁶ and many insurance plans don't cover costs regarding ASD evaluations or treatment.⁵ As a result, many families absorb the brunt of the costs and tend to turn to therapies and treatments they can manage at home, without the need for clinical intervention or advice, perpetuating the use of treatment options with limited evidence of effectiveness.

Parents turn to one another, across the internet, and share stories on what has worked for them and their families. Misinformation is pervasive among families and patients looking for answers, from causes to treatments of ASDs. Some treatment options with limited scientific backing often encourage unrealistic expectations about results and impede the progress of identifying effective interventions for children and adolescents with ASD.⁴ What works for one child may not work for another, and the meticulous scheduling, nutrition plans, supplements, and activities can take over life. It's important to consider the therapies that are right for our children, and to not over therapize so that there's still time for family.¹

Parents need evidence-based care planning, support, and guidance on what might be right for their child wherever they are on the spectrum, in their health journey, and for their individual strengths and weaknesses. Using data, care plans are sourced and matched to patients and families.

References

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