

# Getting Started

We have provided (below) a list of things that you can do to get started. Many of them are also listed on the recommendations you were given in the OHSU Autism Clinic.

☐ **Schedule an appointment with your primary care doctor.**

- Bring a copy of the reports you were given after your evaluation with us. Your referring provider should also be receiving the results from Doernbecher.
- Discuss the information you were given and get any referrals for therapies or follow-up appointments if needed.
- Make sure your doctor is comfortable and knowledgeable regarding ASD.

☐ **Contact your local Education Service District (ESD) if your child is under 5 years old.**

- Begin an Early Intervention (EI) program if your child is not already participating in one. These programs are usually free in Oregon and Washington.

☐ **If your child is school-aged, share the information with the teacher or school special education team.**

- Sharing information and coming up with a plan together is helpful for the school, the parents and most of all, the child. Your child may need to have an Individual Education Program (IEP) developed or an existing program changed to support his or her success.

☐ **Talk to another parent of a child with ASD.**

- The Autism Society of Oregon (ASO) can connect you with other families in your area. OHSU and ASO also collaborate on the Welcome Project to help families and individuals connect with each other.
- The Family Involvement Network (FIN) is a free program that is staffed by family members and Spanish language speakers are available. For more information, contact **503-494-0864**.

☐ **Talk to a peer with ASD.**

- If you are a teenager or adult, it may be helpful for you to talk to someone who also been diagnosed with ASD. You may find others at school, or social clubs or events that are specifically for individuals with an ASD. The Autism Society of Oregon and the Welcome Project can also help to connect you to others in your community.

# Receiving an ASD Diagnosis

Finding out that you or your child is experiencing ASD can be a very emotional time. All families react in different ways, but many people report struggling on some level.

As a parent, you love your child so much that it can be heartbreaking to think that things will be hard for him or her. Adults receiving a diagnosis for themselves may also have many different emotions. Some may be relieved to finally understand themselves better, while others may feel overwhelmed.

Facing and accepting an ASD diagnosis is not a one-time experience. There may be times when things are going well and parents or individuals feel they have come to accept their diagnoses, and then something will trigger the emotions all over again.

There are emotional stages that many individuals report experiencing, which may include:

## **Shock or confusion**

The day you or your child is diagnosed with ASD can be very overwhelming and confusing. Some people may deal with this by not agreeing with the diagnosis, getting angry or wanting a second opinion. Some people “disconnect” and attempt to ignore the information, while others just feel at a loss for how to communicate about it. It takes time to really process the news you have been given.

## **Sadness**

Some people feel like they are mourning the loss of what they thought they or their child might become. Sometimes the realization of how unfair it will be that they or their child will struggle with some things is hard to accept. It is normal to be sad and upset, and it is healthy to cry. As a parent, it is important to not let the sadness consume you because the thing you and your child need most is you. Starting to come up with a plan for how you are going to move forward to help yourself and/or your child may help you feel more in control, even if it is just one step at a time.

