

Handout 1—Accurate and reliable information

By finding accurate and reliable information sources on autism spectrum disorder (ASD), you can make sure you are reading the best and most useful articles and research regarding autism in young children.

- **Accurate:** Information that is accurate provides correct and true information regarding ASD.
- **Reliable:** Information that is reliable means that it is consistent and dependable. Information from a reliable source will be fair and well-rounded.

Here are a few tips on how to do this:

- **Make sure the information is up-to-date.** The information should have a date of publication on it. A general rule is to stick with sources from the last 2 years—or maybe even more recent sources if the subject is about treatment.
- **Consider where the information came from.** Is it from a research journal article, a newspaper, a magazine, a Web page, the government, an organization, or an advocacy group? Research journal articles, government and organization Web pages, and advocacy groups most likely offer the most accurate and reliable information.
- **Be careful using the Internet.** Searching can yield a lot of hits, but it may not bring back useful or credible information.
- **Consider who wrote the information.** Who is the author? Who funded the research? An article funded by a drug company may present biased information about the company's medication, for instance.
- **Is the information based on research or on someone's opinion?** An opinion could offer ideas of where to look for more information, but most likely it should not be considered a reliable source.
- **Where is the research published?** If a research article is not published by a government or known agency or a scientific journal, consider ignoring it. Research that has not been reviewed by experts in the field may not provide helpful information.
- **How can the information help your family?** Does the information you find answer questions you have?

It can be really helpful to keep a record of good places to find information. Then, you can go back to these resources when you want to read them again or find additional information.



Handout 3—Template for tracking questions and answers

As the caregiver of a young child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), you most likely have a lot of questions. It can sometimes feel overwhelming to have so many questions, and be unsure of the answers. As you think of questions, consider writing them down on this template. Then, when you have a moment, you can brainstorm 2–3 possible resources, people, Web sites, organizations, etc., that may be able to provide you with an answer.

Questions	Resources for Answers
Questions as they arise	2–3 possible ideas

Handout 4— Explaining autism spectrum disorders to siblings

Having a sibling with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can be challenging for siblings. Some may wonder why their sibling is different. Others may just accept these differences and not make a big deal out of them. From an early age, it is helpful for siblings to understand what ASD is and how it affects their brother or sister with ASD. This can also help them to find the words to explain it to their friends, if friends ask questions. Having common language that your family uses to understand and communicate about ASD can be helpful.

Here are a few tips on how to do this:

- **Early and often.** Talking to siblings about ASD on a regular basis can help them understand their brother or sister. Start early, using words that siblings can understand. Demystify the symptoms of ASD in your child with ASD and help siblings learn how to develop a good relationship.
- **Age appropriate.** Explanations of ASD should be relative to the age of the child. A very young sibling will not understand a comprehensive explanation of possible genetic causes of ASD. Yet, they will wonder if they can catch it, and how they can play with their sibling the best way will be important to them. Teenage siblings will be more ready for more in-depth explanations.
- **Explanations will change.** Additional information and explanations may change as siblings get older. The basic point that your child with ASD has differences and that everyone has something different about them may stay the same. As children get older, they can understand more about ASD in relation to the world.
- **Ask siblings.** Siblings may have concerns or questions. Involve them in the discussion, asking for their opinion and finding out what their understanding of their brother or sister with ASD is. Children will surprise you with their insight and ability to accept and understand.
- **Understanding special qualities.** Explaining ASD to siblings is not about making your child with ASD appear different or challenged. It's about helping the sibling to understand the unique qualities of ASD in order to enhance their relationship with their sister or brother. All children, all people, have unique characteristics that make them special. Understanding what each brings to the other's life is important.