

# Additional Contact Information

## Los Angeles and surrounding cities

Ability First  
(323)-268-8178  
[www.abilityfirst.org](http://www.abilityfirst.org)

Autism Society of Whittier  
(562) 943-3335  
[www.greaterlongbeach-asa.org](http://www.greaterlongbeach-asa.org)

Boys and Girls Club  
(323) 971-6161  
[www.cbglcla.org](http://www.cbglcla.org)

Fiesta Educativa  
(323) 221-6696  
[www.fiestaeducativa.org](http://www.fiestaeducativa.org)

Loving Your Disabled Child  
(323) 299-2925

Project SEA (Socialization, Awareness and Education)  
(562) 366-9700  
[www.projectsea.org](http://www.projectsea.org)

South Center Los Angeles Regional Center (SCLARC)  
(213) 763-7800  
[www.sclarc.org](http://www.sclarc.org)

Special Olympics  
(310) 215-8380  
[www.sosc.org](http://www.sosc.org)

Westside Regional Center  
(310) 258-4000  
[www.westsiderc.org](http://www.westsiderc.org)

**A**lways  
**U**nique  
**T**otally  
**I**nteresting  
**S**ometimes  
**M**ysterious



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Autism in Los Angeles and surrounding communities



Community  
Outreach  
Program  
2004

## What Is Autism?

This is by far the most frequently asked question. Briefly, it is a severely incapacitating lifelong developmental disorder that typically emerges in the first three years of life. It causes impairment or disturbance in 3 main areas: Social skills, communicative (verbal as well as non-verbal) skills and in their repetitive and restricted behaviors. Autistic individuals may show abnormal responses to sensations. One or more of the senses may be affected. All these difficulties manifest themselves in behaviors i.e. abnormal ways of relating to people, objects and events in the environment.



One in every 250 children born this year will have some form of autism



Autism is the third most common developmental disorder - more common than Down Syndrome or cystic fibrosis

## What Is The Cause?

At this point in time we do not know what causes Autism. However, current research indicates that anything that can produce structural or functional damage to the central nervous system can also produce the condition of Autism. We know that certain viruses and known genetic conditions are associated with Autism. In addition, there are families that have more than one child with autism. At present, it is believed that about 10% of all cases can be accounted for genetically.

## Can The Child Ever Live An Independent Life?

Autism is a spectrum disorder. Currently there is no reliable objective to measure how severe Autism is in each individual child. Children with Autism have the potential to build skills with the help of early, well-focused intervention. Depending on the child's individual skill profile and the appropriateness and intensity of intervention he or she receives, children with Autism can lead relatively independent lives.



Autism is four times more common in boys than girls



Autism is a lifelong developmental disability

## Is There A Cure?

Since we do not know what causes Autism, we cannot fix (cure) what is wrong in the child's brain. Many therapies (medications, diets, etc.) have shown some level of effectiveness, but nothing is medically proven. The most effective therapies are based on an appropriate training program that is specifically tailored to the child's needs. Autism is a life long condition but with appropriate intervention (training methods) the child can progress to his or her fullest potential.

## Common Characteristics of Autism

People with autism process and respond to information in unique ways. In some cases, aggressive and/or self-injurious behavior may be present. Persons with autism may also exhibit some of the following traits:

- Insistence on sameness; resistance to change
- Difficulty in expressing needs; using gestures or pointing instead of words
- Repeating words or phrases in place of normal, responsive language
- Laughing, crying, showing distress for reasons not apparent to others
- Prefers being alone; aloof manner
- Tantrums
- Difficulty in mixing with others
- May not want to cuddle or be cuddled
- Little or no eye contact
- Unresponsive to normal teaching methods
- Sustained odd play
- Spins objects
- Inappropriate attachments to objects
- Apparent over-sensitivity or under-sensitivity to pain
- No real fears of danger
- Noticeable physical over-activity or extreme under-activity
- Uneven gross/fine motor skills
- Not responsive to verbal cues; acts as if deaf although hearing tests in normal range