

How Autism Is Perceived

Different cultural factors impact how Autism is understood, interpreted, and accepted in different communities. They affect the life experiences and outcomes of Autistic people and their families, as well as the support and resources available for them. Sometimes, cultural barriers may prevent people from seeking a diagnosis or accessing services. Identifying and navigating culture barriers is crucial to advocating for Autistic individuals. Barriers may include:

- ◆ fear of social and emotional isolation
- ◆ feelings of blame and shame
- ◆ healthcare disparities

- ◆ distrusting authority, organization, etc.
- ◆ respect and deference
- ◆ lack of representation

- ◆ financial difficulties to access services
- ◆ limited access to health care and support services

- ◆ reduced access to support and services
- ◆ increased stress; legal and financial challenges

- ◆ difficulty communicating needs
- ◆ lack of translated materials
- ◆ difficulty understanding information

- ◆ feeling overwhelmed by the diagnosis
- ◆ may take longer to start seeking support

- ◆ lack of availability of quality services
- ◆ long distance travel to access resources/therapies

- ◆ historical discrimination
- ◆ discomfort in sharing facts with healthcare providers

How Service Providers Can Help

- ◆ create opportunities for families to connect with other caregivers and Autistic advocates
- ◆ become familiar with culturally sensitive topics
- ◆ provide culturally responsive support
- ◆ implement policies in work places that allow diverse people to feel included and heard
- ◆ educate families with knowledge about their rights
- ◆ offer translation services and recommend bilingual providers and services



Reference: SAAC Diagnostic Toolkit 2023: <https://bridgethegap.saaac.org/>. National Autistic Society: www.autism.org.uk. Raphael Bernier, Alice Mao, Jennifer Yen. Psychopathology, Families, and Culture: Autism. https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/Docs/resource_centers/cultural_diversity/competency_curriculum%20cap_training/cases_supporting_materials/clinics/Bernier-psychoopathology_families_and_culture-autism.pdf

For more information, contact Kerry's Place Autism Services:

+1-833-77-KERRY/1-833-775-3779

intake@kerrysplace.org

kerrysplace.org



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