

# Developmental Medicine at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh

## Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Evaluations

### Our Team

Our Developmental Medicine team comprises psychologists with specialized training and experience in diagnostic evaluation of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Psychologists on our team provide comprehensive psychological evaluations to help determine if a child meets the diagnostic criteria for ASD and to help families connect to additional support and services.

### What Is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

ASD is a neurodevelopmental condition present from the early developmental period. Children with ASD experience difficulties with communication skills and social abilities and demonstrate restricted or repetitive behaviors and interests. The term "spectrum" refers to the various ways in which ASD can present in different individuals, in terms of the specific symptoms that are present and to what extent these symptoms cause difficulties for a child. When a child is diagnosed with ASD, they are often assigned a "Level" for the diagnosis (Level 1, 2, or 3). The Level is meant to correspond to the amount of support a child requires or would benefit from at a given time.

### Your Visit

Evaluations typically last two to three hours. In some cases, you may be offered an extended evaluation that may last up to five hours if your child is 5 years or older.

At your child's visit:

- You will be asked to complete and return paperwork prior to your child's appointment that will help provide important information about your child to the psychologist you will be working with.

- A clinical interview will be conducted to gather additional information about your child's development, behavior, and several specific skill areas.
- Informal behavioral observations will be made of your child's communication, social, and play skills.
- Standardized assessment will be conducted, including the ADOS-2 if deemed applicable.
- Feedback will be provided about the results of the evaluation, including **whether or not your child meets diagnostic criteria for ASD**. Diagnoses and recommendations will be discussed. You will be connected with services that are appropriate for your child.
- You will receive a comprehensive evaluation report in the mail shortly after the evaluation.

### What Is the ADOS-2?

The ADOS-2 stands for the **Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Second Edition**, and is just one part of your child's evaluation to determine if they meet criteria for ASD. The ADOS-2 is a standardized assessment that is currently considered a gold-standard assessment instrument for evaluating symptoms of ASD. The ADOS-2 is a semi-structured, play-based assessment in which a variety of interactive tasks and activities are presented to your child. The evaluator will observe your child's social responses and communication skills throughout the assessment and will also make observation of any restricted or repetitive behaviors. There are several versions of the ADOS-2 that account for differences in age and language ability. Depending on the version that is most appropriate for your child, you may be asked to remain in the evaluation room or leave the evaluation room during the assessment. For most versions of the assessment, caregivers remain in the evaluation room.