New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department | Family Support and Early Intervention Division
FAMILY INFANT TODDLER (FIT) PROGRAM

CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT & DISABILITY

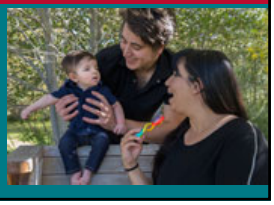
Understanding Autism Diagnostic Resources in New Mexico

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UNM-CDD ECEP and ASEC Teams

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University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center

Department of Pediatrics - Center for Development & Disability



Agenda and Objectives for today



- Reviewing our Journey
- Current diagnostic resources in NM
- Continuing the discussion - now and beyond
- Questions, answers, feedback, and next steps

Introductions and Housekeeping

- Today's CDD and ECEP Teams
- We want to see you!
- We want to hear you!
  - Please use the chat or jump in with comments, ideas, and questions.
  - Goal is to share experiences and knowledge



Reviewing our Journey…





October 2023: UNM CDD Early Childhood Network (ECN) team hosted **virtual World Café** conversations with FIT providers. The topic was autism diagnostics.

Feedback was gathered from three distinct groups within the early intervention workforce:

- **Early Intervention Provider Agency Leaders/Coordinators**
- **Family Service Coordinators**
- **Early Intervention Direct Service Providers**

From Davidson, October 2025

The World Café conversations were guided by the following three questions for each group:

- What are the potential characteristics of children who should be prioritized for assessment?
- What should the assessment include?
- How can UNM's Early Childhood Evaluation Program (ECEP) and FIT providers better collaborate?

From Davidson, October 2025



Conversation themes: Prioritization of children based on..

- Level of complexity/severity
- Age (youngest, or oldest)
- Geography
- Method of payment/access to insurance

From Davidson, October 2025

Conversation themes: Assessment components

FIT PROVIDER AGENCY COORDINATORS

Family's understanding of the process and the diagnostic report should be top priority of assessment process.

FIT should be able to help family access recommended resources at UNM CDD.

expressed appreciation for ECEP's team approach to evaluation.

DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDERS/ FAMILY SERVICE COORDINATORS

Top priority: Listening to the family and working hard to understand the family's impression of their child.

Top priority: Resource management as a key component of the assessment, meaning early intervention and ECEP team should offer resources to assist a family no matter what phase of the diagnostic process they are in.

Family support was a key theme - providers believed that families should receive training and support before and during the diagnostic process.

Data from the early intervention agency should be used to inform the assessment.

From Davidson, October 2025

Conversation themes: ECEP and FIT collaboration

FIT PROVIDER AGENCY COORDINATORS

Reported missing the days when ECEP staff were able to travel to different regions, rather than families always traveling to Albuquerque.

Can be difficult for staff to travel to attend the evaluation with the family.

Collaboration should also include considerations about the emotional impact of a diagnosis and of linguistic needs of the family.

DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDERS/ FAMILY SERVICE COORDINATORS

Direct Service Providers reported wishing to be included in more of the conversations with the ECEP team, not just Family Service Coordinator; exclusion results in the evaluation team not always having important information about the child/family.

FSCs and families needed support while on the wait list, e.g., the family waiting a year and the ECEP team only having the information that was shared a year prior, when so much had changed. This group also expressed a wish for more triage support prior to making a referral to ECEP.

LD0

Efforts between October 2023 and October 2025 (and Jan 2026)

What has the field of autism diagnostics done to address the concerns?

1. **CDD's ongoing training** of local psychologists and pediatricians to strengthen their ability to be a more active participant in the diagnostic process.
2. **Training** for early intervention direct service providers on **evidence-based interventions** for babies and toddlers with autism.
3. **Changing the policy** in the FIT Service Definitions and Standards regarding how to proceed after a child scores in the risk section of the Modified-Checklist for Autism in Toddlers **(M-CHAT).**

1. Resulted in an **increase in local providers** with the ability to diagnose autism in very young children.
2. Resulted in a **knowledge increase** for early interventionists working with children waiting on a diagnostic wait list.
3. Resulted in **increase in children being evaluated more quickly** because after triage, some referrals could be diverted to local diagnostic providers.

Slide 10

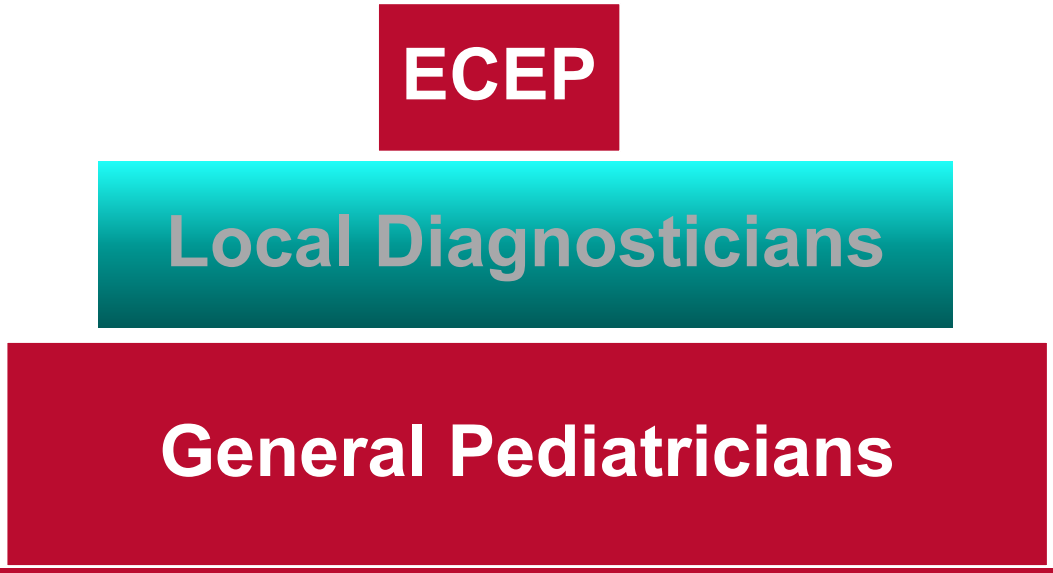
LD0 Highlight the third point to provide an opportunity to talk about the difference between automatic referral and the triage process
Davidson, Leah, ECECD, 2025-11-07T18:27:20.985

Pyramid of Diagnostic Resources (2023)



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Pyramid of Diagnostic Resources (2025)



Slide 12

LD0 Make the larger box smaller

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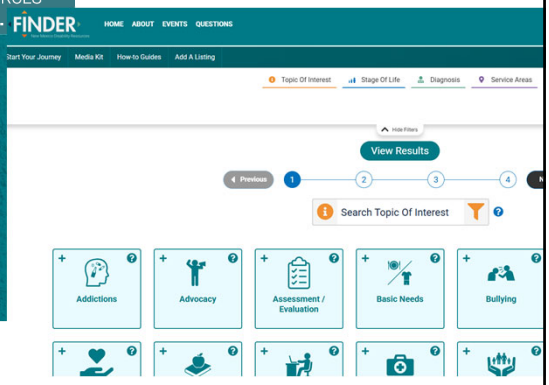
FINDER

NEW MEXICO DISABILITY RESOURCES

Seek. Discover. Connect. Inform.

Seek. Discover. Connect. Inform.

NM FINDER is a **free** online resource that gives you 24/7 access to the service providers, programs, equipment and community advocates that can improve your quality of life.



https://www.nmfinder.org/

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ECHO Autism

CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT & DISABILITY

STAT Early Diagnostic Model

What is ECHO Autism?
Moving knowledge, not people



ECHO Autism bridges the **care gap** between **autism specialists**, community health care clinicians, **and children on the autism spectrum**

How it works

Professionals receive specific deidentified **case guidance** in a convenient, interactive **web-based** small-group format

Learn and share best practices for managing medical and psychiatric co-occurring conditions, connect with community resources, and family/caregiver support

All Teach, All Learn Model

Registration link: http://bit.ly/3Wze9H5

ECHO Autism STAT Instrument Training:
March 5-6, 2026

ECHO Autism:
Primary Care Early Diagnosis
virtual sessions
2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month
March 24, 2026 - March 9, 2027
12:30pm - 2:00pm MT

Who Should Participate?

New Mexico primary care pediatricians, family physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners

Learn more about
ECHO Autism Communities
echoautism.org

Questions?
Contact Courtney Burnette
cburnette@salud.unm.edu

ECHO AUTISM COMMUNITIES · Project ECHO

ECHO Autism: STAT Early Diagnostic Model

Benefits

Learn the skills necessary to evaluate, differentiate and diagnose children with unambiguous characteristics of autism between the ages of 14-48 months with support of the ECHO Autism Hub team.

Utilize best practices and evidence-based care to treat common co-occurring conditions in children on the autism spectrum.

State of the art training in autism evaluation using the STAT (Screening Tool for Autism in Toddlers):
- No cost STAT Instrument training
- No cost STAT kit
- Free two-night lodging for out of town participants

No-Cost CME Credit
- 11 hours for STAT instrument training
- Up to 3 hours per month for ECHO Autism sessions

Commitments:

- **Attend an in-person STAT instrument training March 5-6, 2026 in Albuquerque.**
- **Participate in virtual ECHO Autism: Primary Care Early Diagnosis sessions on the 2nd & 4th Tuesday of every month from 12:30 - 2:00pm beginning March 24, 2026**
- **Complete steps to become reliable on the STAT instrument**
- **Present diagnostic cases to the ECHO Autism Hub Team for verification of diagnosis**

Registration link: http://bit.ly/3Wze9H5

ECHO AUTISM COMMUNITIES · Project ECHO

Meet the Team



Courtney Burnette, PhD
Clinical Psychologist
Certified STAT Trainer



Gabriel Anzueto, MD
Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrician



Lauriann King, CFPSW
Resource Specialist
Lived Experience Expert



Mary Boehm, MBA, MA, CCC, SLP
Speech Language Pathologist

Interested? Contact
Courtney Burnette
cburnette@salud.unm.edu

HEALTH SCIENCES

ECHO Autism: Advanced Diagnosis

NM ECHO: Advanced Diagnosis

New Mexico ECHO: Advanced Diagnosis is a no-cost program that supports community professionals to receive specific deidentified case guidance using a convenient, interactive, virtual, small-group format. NM ECHO Autism: Advanced Diagnosis connects local clinicians across the state with specialist clinicians to support best practice ASD diagnostic evaluations.

Topics Covered

- Role of Cognitive/Intelligence testing in ASD diagnosis
- Understanding diagnosis in girls and women with ASD
- Common co-occurring medical conditions in ASD
- Common co-occurring psychiatric conditions with ASD
- Interpreting and writing ADOS-2 results

Target Audience

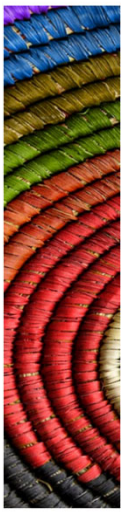
New Mexico psychologists, physician diagnosticians, and other clinicians who will use the ADOS-2 as part of comprehensive diagnostic assessment. Other clinicians who want to learn and share best practices are also welcome.

To learn more, or to find an ECHO Autism trained physician and clinician, visit https://echoautism.org/find-a-professional/

Or email CDD-ECHOAutism@salud.unm.edu

Weaving Colors

Indigenous Family Training



Weaving Colors was formed in 2022 (?) to help meet the needs of indigenous community members who were looking for ways to help support their child with autism as well as build connections with other families like themselves. The program is a monthly virtual presentation series dedicated to discussing important topics on autism and how they are viewed and addressed in the native culture.

TRAININGS & REGISTRATION INFORMATION

WHEN: Every 3rd Wednesday of the month

TIME: 1 pm – 2:30 pm

WHERE: Online

Closed Captioning & ASL interpretation are available

Additional Resources:

Indigenous Resources Website:
https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/native-resources/

UNM Center for Development and Disability:
https://hsc.unm.edu/cdd/

Telephone: 505-272-1852 or 1-800-270-1861

Email: HSC-AutismPrograms@salud.unm.edu
(Attn: Weaving Colors)

Additional UNM/CDD Resources

Autism Portal:
https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/ Information

Network Portal:
https://cdd.health.unm.edu/infonet/

Finder:
https://www.nmfinder.org/

Online Resource Locator:
https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/survey/

Recursos de Autism Para Familias Y Proveedores:
https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/espanol-proximamente/

Determining “best-fit” for families

Best practices in autism diagnostics are based more on *process* than *use of particular tool*; utility of *ADOS-2* is dependent on evaluator’s expertise and understanding of its limitations (Bishop & Lord, 2023).

Telehealth can be an effective means of autism diagnosis; a systematic review looking at feasibility and accuracy of diagnosis across 18 studies showed comparable accuracy with a diagnostic agreement of 80–88.2%.

Other considerations for "best-fit"

Recent study in Nature Genetics (2025) identified 4 subtypes of autism based on genetics and behavior:

- **Social/Behavioral (37%)** characterized by core social difficulties, repetitive bxs, and comorbid ADHD/anxiety
- **Mixed with Dev Delay (19%)** features both autism and early delays.
- **Moderate Challenges (34%)** characterized by milder, subtle autism traits and typical development
- **Broadly affected (10%)** experiencing significant, wide-ranging developmental delays, profound social challenges, and mental health conditions

Family Centered Care

"Ten years from now, I may not remember the particular test or therapies administered to my son, but I will most definitely remember the interaction I had with you. I will strive to remember your name and especially the way in which you spoke with me and my child—the compassion you exhibited."

(A parent, in Leff et al., 1991 Children's Health Care)

Discussion: Questions, Feedbacks, and Learning from Experience





How are these experiences for families?

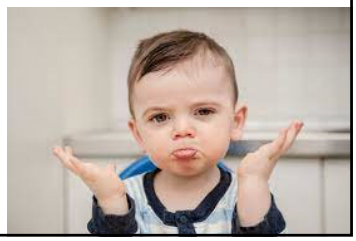
What questions do they have?

What questions do you have?

What do families need?

What do providers need?

What's going well, and what is still challenging?



References

Bishop, SL, & Lord, C. (2023). Commentary: **Best practices** and *processes* **for** assessment of **autism** spectrum disorder – the intended role of standardized **diagnostic** instruments. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 64:5, pp 834–838.

Katakis, P., Estrin, G.L., Wolstencroft, J. *et al.* Diagnostic Assessment of Autism in Children Using Telehealth in a Global Context: a Systematic Review. *Rev J Autism Dev Disord* **12**, 566–581 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-023-00408-z

Wiseman, S. Big data for classifying ASD. *Nat Neurosci* **28**, 1577 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41593-025-02046-6

Questions?



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