

**South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs
Autism Division**

DSM-5 Changes and the Impact on Autism Services Provided by DDSN

Changes to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) revised the fifth edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). The manual is used by clinicians nationwide to diagnose mental health conditions. One of the most important changes in the DSM-5 is to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Per the APA, the revised diagnosis represents a new, more accurate, and medically and scientifically useful way of diagnosing individuals with autism related disorders.

Using DSM-IV, individuals could be diagnosed with four separate disorders: Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, or Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified. Researchers found that these separate diagnoses were not consistently applied across different clinics and treatment centers. Based on these findings, the APA's Neurodevelopmental Work Group recommended the DSM-5 criteria for ASD to be a better reflection of the state of knowledge about autism. The Work Group believes a single umbrella disorder will improve the diagnosis of ASD without limiting the sensitivity of the criteria, or substantially changing the number of individuals being diagnosed.

The DSM-5 criteria were tested in real-life clinical settings as part of DSM-5 field trials, and analysis from that testing indicated that there will be no significant changes in the prevalence of the disorder. More recently, the largest and most up-to-date study, published by Huerta, et al, in the October 2012 issue of American Journal of Psychiatry, provided the most comprehensive assessment of the DSM-5 criteria for ASD based on symptom extraction from previously collected data. The study found that DSM-5 criteria identified 91 percent of children with clinical DSM-IV PDD diagnoses, suggesting that most children with DSM-IV PDD diagnoses will retain their diagnosis of ASD using the new criteria. (*APA DSM-5 Autism Spectrum Disorder Fact Sheet*)

The revision in the DSM-5 introduces two fundamental changes in the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.

1. It collapses previously distinct autism subtypes, including autistic disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified, and Asperger's syndrome, into one unifying diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
2. The three symptom domains of social impairment, communication deficits, and repetitive/restricted behaviors will become two: social communication impairment and repetitive/restricted behaviors.

Impact on Autism Services Provided by DDSN

Prior to the revised DSM, individuals who were diagnosed with PDD-NOS or Asperger's were unable to receive services from DDSN. DDSN will now serve all individuals with an ASD diagnosis if the individual meets the DDSN eligibility criteria. The changes posed by the DSM-5 will not alter the DDSN eligibility process or how the Autism Division evaluates individuals suspected of having an ASD. The Autism Division will continue to use age appropriate screening tools and evaluation instruments that represent current best practices.

Previously Diagnosed Individuals

- If the Autism Division evaluated an individual using the DSM-IV criteria and the individual received the diagnosis of an ASD other than autism (i.e. PDD-NOS, Asperger's), the individual will not be required by DDSN to undergo another evaluation to determine the presence of an ASD. However, the individual will be required to go through the eligibility process if they desire services from DDSN.
- If an individual or the parents of an individual are interested in DDSN services and the individual received a diagnosis of PDD-NOS or Asperger's from an entity other than the Autism Division, the individual must go through the DDSN eligibility process. Per the current eligibility process, the Autism Division will review all relevant documentation to verify the diagnosis of an ASD. If the documentation does not support an ASD diagnosis, the individual must be evaluated prior to eligibility being determined.

Eligibility Process

- Individuals interested in receiving services from DDSN who were previously diagnosed with an ASD other than autism, should call the Information and Referral toll-free number (1-800-289-7012). The screener should be informed that the individual was previously diagnosed with PDD-NOS or Asperger's and is now seeking DDSN eligibility. The screener will verify contact information and offer a choice of Service Coordination providers. The selected Service Coordination provider will assist the individual with the eligibility process.

Individuals Receiving PDD Services

- Changes in the DSM-5 will not affect the manner in which PDD services are provided by DDSN. However, individuals participating in the PDD Program who are interested in DDSN services beyond those provided in the PDD Program will be required to go through the DDSN eligibility process if they have not yet been determined eligible. The individual's Case Manager will be responsible for initiating eligibility determination if requested by the individual's parent(s).