What is autism?

Autism refers to a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. Autism includes a wide range, or spectrum, of strengths and needs.

“Autism is a way of being. It is pervasive; it colors every experience, every sensation, perception, thought, emotion and encounter, every aspect of existence. It is not possible to separate the autism from the person- and if it were possible, the person you’d have left would not be the same person you started with.”

What are some signs of autism?

Possible signs of autism in babies and toddlers:

By 6 months, no social smiles or other warm, joyful expressions directed at people

By 6 months, limited or no eye contact

By 9 months, no sharing of vocal sounds, smiles or other nonverbal communication

By 12 months, no use of gestures to communicate

By 24 months, no meaningful, two-word phrases

Continued on page 2
Possible signs of autism at any age:

- Struggles with understanding other people’s feelings
- Repeats words or phrases over and over (echolalia)
- Gets upset by minor changes in routine or surroundings
- Has highly restricted interests
- Performs repetitive behaviors such as flapping, rocking or spinning

How should we talk about autism with kids that are typically developing?

When talking to other children about autism, you can explain that children on the autism spectrum may do things a bit differently, but that everyone has their own interests and way of doing things. You can explain that children with autism may find it challenging to talk with you, even if they want to but that it is important to take initiative to include others. Encourage your child to find common interests with someone with autism since it is always easier to talk about something you both like (movies, sports, music, TV shows, etc.) Reaching out to the teacher, school counselor, or speech and language pathologist can be a great first step in learning more about the best way to speak with your child about autism or how include a peer with autism.

For additional information and resources to use when talking with your child about autism, check out the Toolkits by Autism Speaks. These can be found at www.autismspeaks.org.

Where can I go for more information on autism?

- Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI): https://www.ocali.org
- Autism Society of Greater Akron: https://autismakron.org/
- Autism Speaks: https://www.autismspeaks.org

Resources:

- www.autismspeaks.org
Special Olympics Ohio, Inc. is a non-profit corporation funded through private and corporate donations and fundraising projects across the state. This organization is run almost entirely by volunteers. Over 12,000 individuals donate their time to provide the sports training and competition opportunities across the state. The mission of Special Olympics Ohio is to provide year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympic athletes, and the community.

Special Olympics contributes to the physical, social, and psychological development of the athletes. Through successful experiences in sports, they gain confidence and build a positive self-image which carries over into the classroom, home, job and community.

Athletes must be at least eight years of age and identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: intellectual disability, cognitive delays as measured by formal assessment or significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delay that require or have required special instruction. Special Olympics Ohio has approximately 200 local member organizations and over 23,000 athletes who are in training and competition. These organizations originate from County Boards of DD, public schools, developmental centers, parks and recreation departments, churches, parent and community groups.

The concept of Special Olympics began in the early 1960’s when Eunice Kennedy Shriver started a day camp for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The first national meet was held at Soldier Field in Chicago in 1968 for 1,000 athletes from the United States and Canada. Shortly thereafter, Ohio began a Special Olympics program under the name of Ohio Athletic Association. Special Olympics Ohio became incorporated in 1975. Today, there are Special Olympics programs in all 50 state.
This month the PAC Meeting will be held April 18, 2018 from 9:30 - 1:30 at the Summit ESC, 420 Washington Ave., Cuyahoga Falls. Mr. Gary Tonks, Executive Director of the Arc of Ohio will present **What's New in Ohio** in an open forum, and you will learn about legislative issues, waivers, changes, and updates in DD and Medicaid services, and anything else you may have questions about. Please RSVP for meeting/lunch to Alice Doyle at aliced@sst8.org by April 13, 2018. Questions? Contact Marianne Lesko, PAC Consultant at PAC@sst8.org or 330 929-6634 ext. 513927.

Coming up on May 8 will be the **Family Engagement Conference and Second Annual Family Engagement Recognition Showcase** held at the Summit ESC from 9:00 am - 3:30 pm. Special Keynote Speaker and Presenter will be **Dr. Karen Mapp**, senior lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and author of *Beyond the Bake Sale* and *Powerful Partnerships: A Teacher's Guide to engaging Families for Student Success*. There will be an opportunity to learn from Dr. Mapp and participate in breakout sessions. This conference is free to families, school administration and staff, and community agencies. For more information or questions, contact Kathryn Vuchack at kathrynv@sst8.org. To register contact Maureen Cacioppo at: maureenC@sst8.org.