

# Autism in the Black Community

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# Acknowledgment

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At the time of this publication, Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D., served as Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The opinions expressed herein are the views of the authors and do not reflect the official position of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), SAMHSA. No official support or endorsement of DHHS, SAMHSA, for the opinions described in this document is intended or should be inferred.

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Presented 2024



**MHTTC**

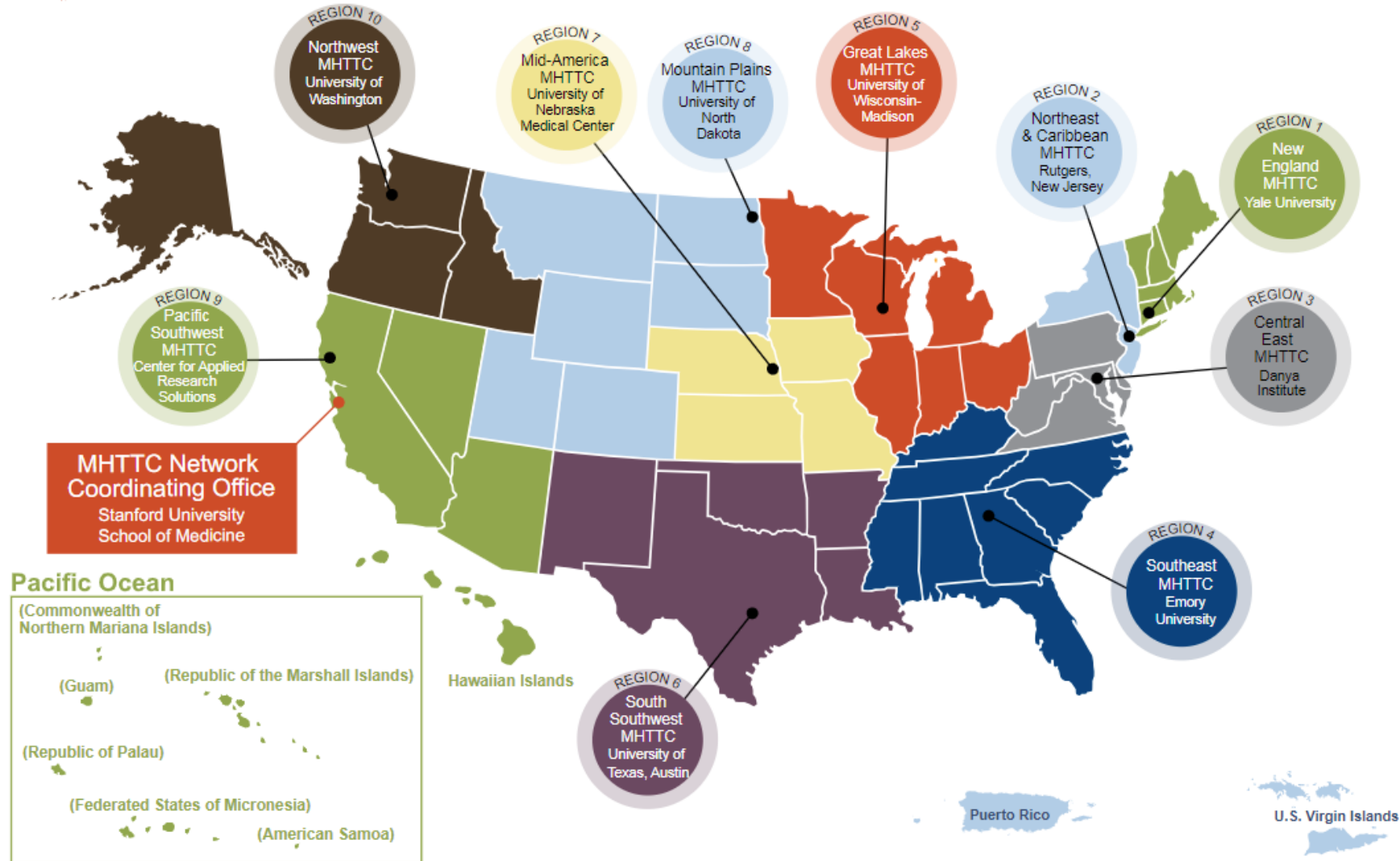
Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

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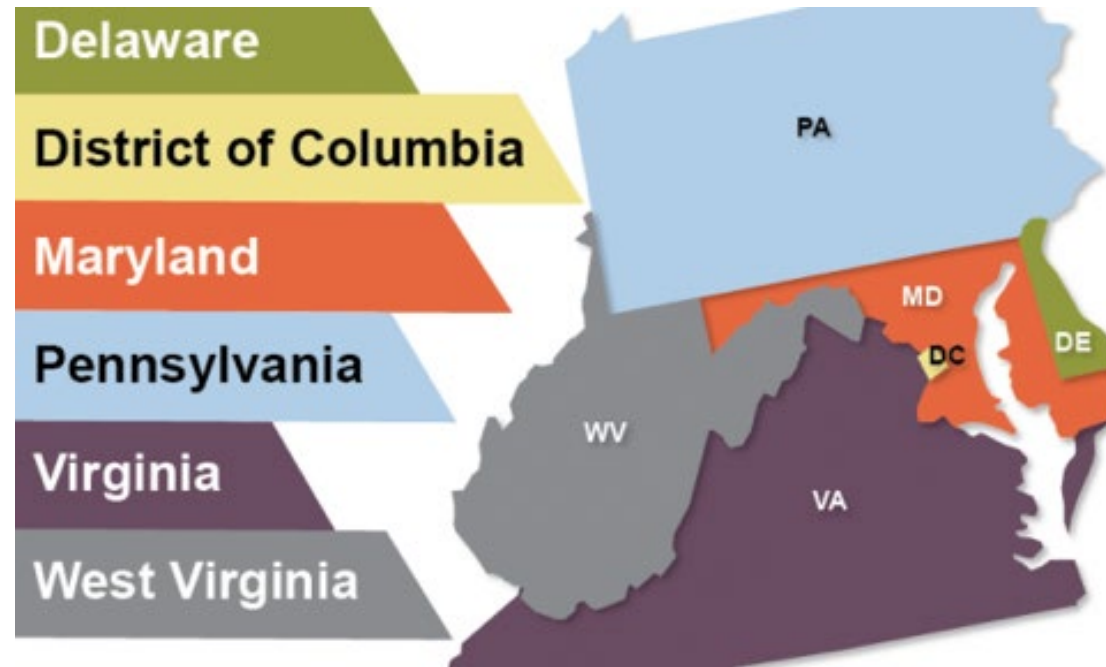
The purpose of the MHTTC Network is technology transfer - disseminating and implementing evidence-based practices for mental disorders into the field.

Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the MHTTC Network includes 10 Regional Centers and a Network Coordinating Office.

Our collaborative network supports resource development and dissemination, training and technical assistance, and workforce development for the mental health field. We work with systems, organizations, and treatment practitioners involved in the delivery of mental health services to strengthen their capacity to deliver effective evidence-based practices to individuals. Our services cover the full continuum spanning mental illness prevention, treatment, and recovery support.



# Central East Region 3



Central East (HHS Region 3)

**MHTTC**

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED  
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND  
ACCEPTING OF  
DIVERSE CULTURES,  
GENDERS,  
PERSPECTIVES,  
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED AND  
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS  
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR  
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND  
FREE OF LABELS

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND  
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

RESPECTFUL, CLEAR  
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

CONSISTENT WITH  
OUR ACTIONS,  
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

# Autism in the Black Community

Presenter: LaKisha Mamon, MD

Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist

Clinical Associate Professor, Louisiana State University

Moderator: Annelle Primm, MD, MPH

Black Psychiatrists of America, Council of Elders

**April 18, 2024**



MHTTC

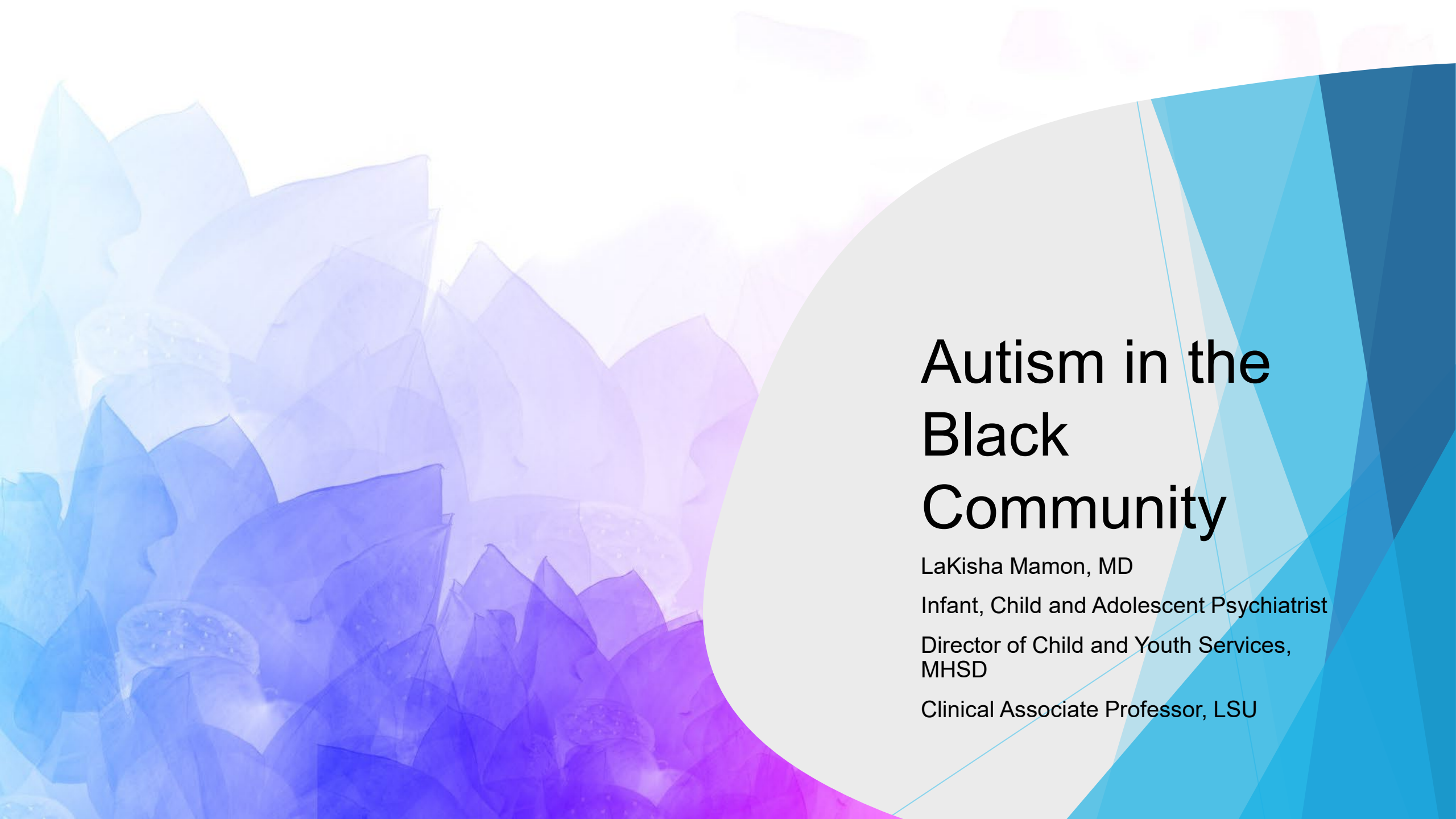
Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

# Today's Webinar

- April is Autism Awareness Month, a good time to discuss Autism, and the need to maximize the quality of life of children and adults with this condition; which affects all demographics, including Black communities.
- We thank the SAMHSA CE-MHTTC for its partnership on the BPA Health Equity Webinar series.
- Content has both Central East region and national relevance.
- Our featured speaker is LaKisha Mamon, MD





# Autism in the Black Community

LaKisha Mamon, MD

Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist

Director of Child and Youth Services,  
MHSD

Clinical Associate Professor, LSU

1

Review Statistics  
and Prevalence

2

Review Cultural  
Awareness and  
Recognition of  
Autism in Black  
Communities

3

Review Disparities  
and Barriers to  
Access, Diagnosis  
and Treatment

4

Review Solutions to  
Barriers

# Goals and Objectives



**Autism  
Acceptance  
Month**

# autism

*noun* [ä·ti·zəm]

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Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social communication skills and repetitive or restricted behaviors or thinking

*“If you’ve met one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism.”*



# Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- ▶ “ASD is a neurological and developmental disorder that affects how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave.”- National Institute of Mental Health
- ▶ Difficulty with communication
- ▶ Difficulty with social interactions
- ▶ Restricted interests and repetitive behaviors
- ▶ Typically appears by age 2

*The diagnosis of autism knows no racial,  
ethnic or cultural boundaries.*

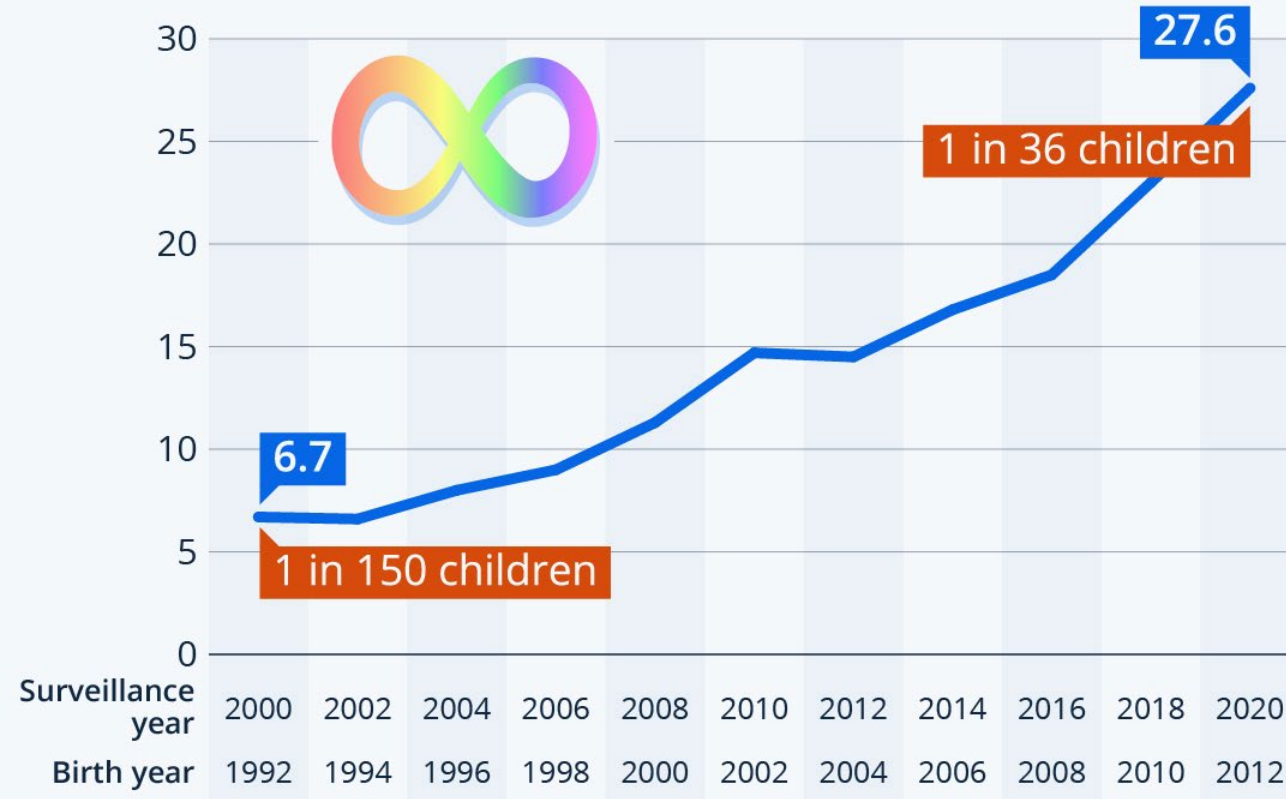
*Yet, the events of recent weeks underscore the fact  
that racial disparities and barriers persist everywhere  
including the autism community.*

Image from Autism NJ

# STATISTICS AND PREVALENCE

# The Rising Prevalence of Autism

Identified prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) per 1,000 children in the U.S.



Source: Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network via CDC



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**Black, Hispanic, and Asian or Pacific Islander children were more likely to be identified with ASD than White children for the first time in ADDM.**



Values indicate prevalence per 1,000 children

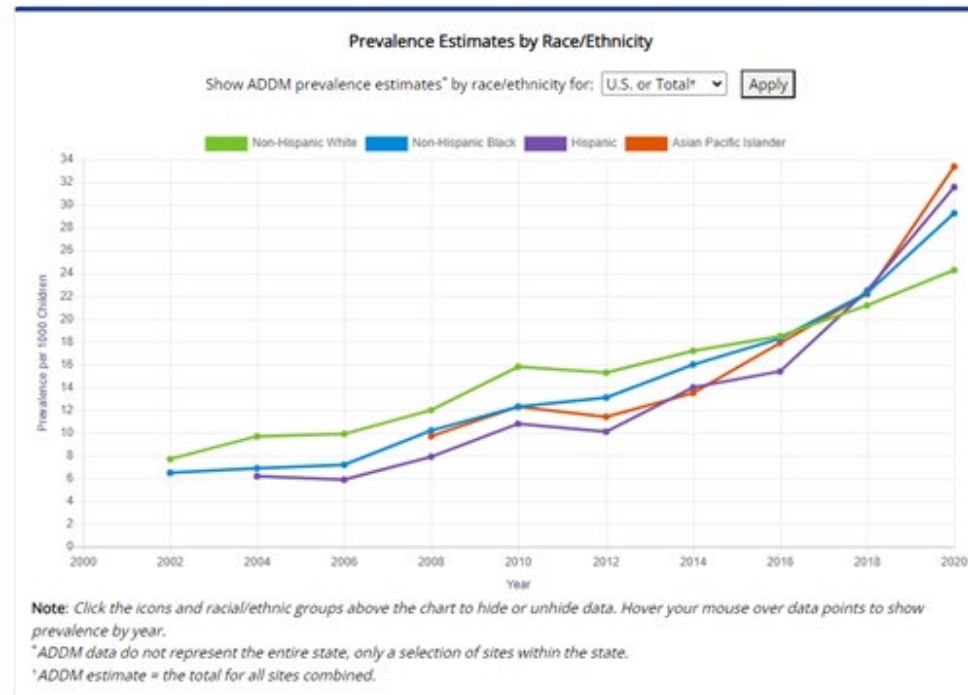
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2023 Newest Data!- CDC Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network

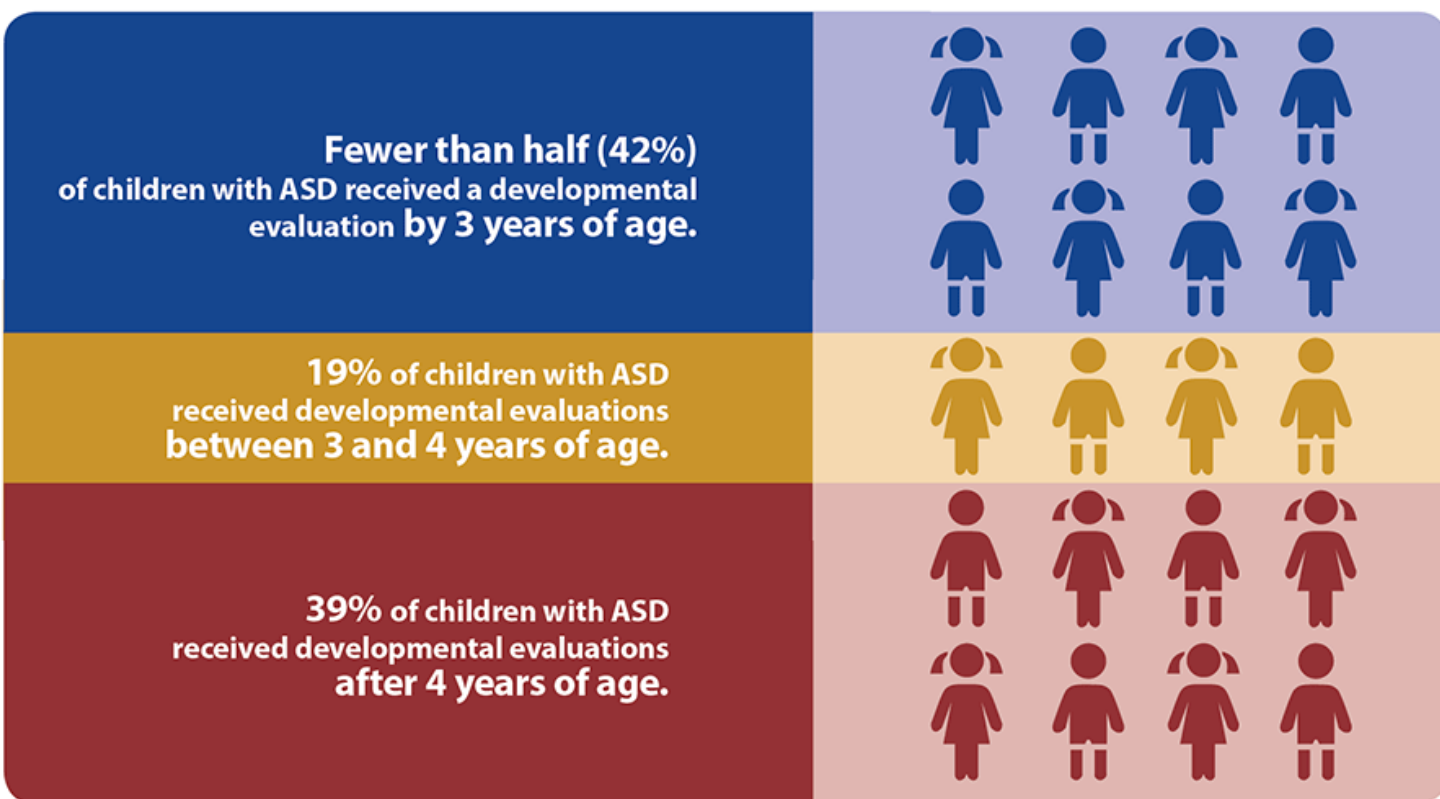


#### 4. REPORTED PREVALENCE VARIES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

There have been racial and ethnic differences observed over the years in ADDM data. Prior to 2014, the percentage of 8-year-old White children with ASD was higher than other groups. In 2014, the percentage of Black children with ASD began to be similar to White children. Asian or Pacific Islander children began to have a similar percentage of children with ASD 2016, as did Hispanic children in 2018. For the first time in 2020, the percentage of 8-year-old Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and Black children identified with ASD was higher than among 8-year-old White children. These shifts may reflect improved screening, awareness, and access to services among historically underserved groups.



# Age of Diagnosis



A small green seedling with several leaves is growing out of a crack in a dark asphalt surface. The background is a bright, hazy sky. The image is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially overlapping a white diagonal shape that separates it from the text area.

## Benefits of Early Diagnosis and Treatment


- ▶ Increases developmental outcomes and improves adaptive skills
- ▶ Earlier start of interventions for the specific needs e.g., social communication, language development, and behavioral challenges
- ▶ Allows families to access appropriate support services, educational resources, community programs
- ▶ Facilitates improved coping mechanisms, reduces parental stress, and increases independence

# Cultural Awareness and Recognition of Autism in Black Communities

The background of the slide features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These shapes are primarily located on the right side of the slide, creating a modern, layered effect.



# Barriers to Early Diagnosis and Treatment in the Black Community

- ▶ ASD diagnosis process can be long, complex, emotionally challenging, and financially draining for families due to the comprehensive work-up by multiple providers in multiple systems of care.
    - ▶ Implicit Bias and Racism
    - ▶ Misdiagnosis
    - ▶ Access to Care
- 

# Implicit Bias and Racism in Healthcare and within the Community

Parents reluctant to bring up concerns to child's doctor.

- Providers are dismissive of parent concerns

Blame/Shame

- Disruptive behaviors attributed to poor parenting or stereotypes

Labeling and stigmatization

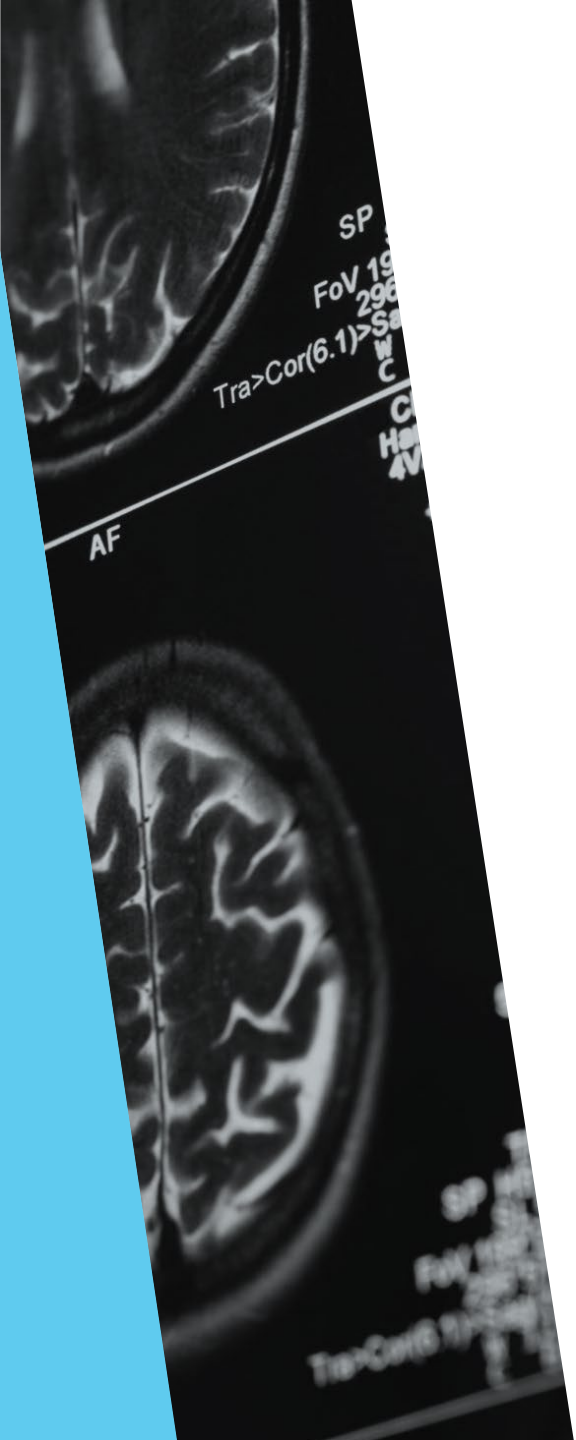
- Concerns of placement in special education

# Cultural and Societal Barriers

- ▶ Black community less likely to talk about mental health struggles.
  - ▶ Parents feel isolated and afraid of judgment
  - ▶ Lack of naming/acknowledgment
- ▶ Lower awareness and recognition of Autism
- ▶ Cultural differences in communication styles and social norms can contribute to misinterpretation of autistic behaviors
  - ▶ Ex: “Boys are slower to develop than girls”

# Misdiagnosis

- ▶ Complex history of misdiagnosis and mistreatment of Black community struggling with mental health issues.
  - ▶ Examples:
    - ▶ Increased diagnosis of schizophrenia instead of mood disorder
    - ▶ Increased misdiagnosis of conduct disorder (“bad”) vs mood disorder or trauma (“sad”)
    - ▶ More incidence of involuntary psychiatric holds
  - ▶ More often diagnosed with intellectual disabilities
  - ▶ Diagnosed with mood disorders instead of ASD





## Access to Services:

- ▶ Socioeconomic factors can impact access to healthcare and educational services, potentially limiting opportunities for early diagnosis and intervention.
- ▶ Some communities may face barriers such as transportation, financial constraints, and limited availability of specialized services.
- ▶ Costs:
  - ▶ Predicted US costs in 2025: \$461 billion
  - ▶ Average cost per year: \$60,000
    - ▶ Costs increase with intellectual disability
  - ▶ Mothers are often the primary caregivers
    - ▶ Earn 35% less than mothers of children with other health conditions
    - ▶ Earn 56% less than mothers of children with no disabilities or disorders

**SOLUTIONS**

The background features a complex, abstract design of overlapping, semi-transparent blue triangles and polygons. The colors range from a light sky blue to a deep, dark navy blue. The shapes are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall composition is clean and modern, typical of a corporate or professional presentation.



# Cultural Competence

- ▶ Healthcare providers and educators need to be culturally competent to understand the unique needs and perspectives of individuals from the Black community
- ▶ Building trust and rapport with families is crucial for effective collaboration in providing support and interventions

## Community Support

- ▶ Establishing community support networks and resources can be vital for families and individuals affected by Autism
- ▶ Culturally relevant support groups and advocacy organizations can help bridge gaps and provide a sense of belonging

# Advocacy

Advocacy efforts within the Black community can focus on increasing awareness, reducing stigma, and improving access to resources and services

Education programs that emphasize early identification and intervention can be instrumental in addressing the challenges associated with Autism

Build trust to address the underrepresentation of Blacks in Autism research studies

# Resources:



[CDC's Milestone Tracker App](#)

<https://www.autisminblack.org/>



# References

- ▶ <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-asd>
- ▶ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/hcp-dsm.html>
- ▶ <https://www.statista.com/chart/29630/identified-prevalence-of-autism-spectrum-disorder-in-the-us/>
- ▶ <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>
- ▶ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/addm-community-report/index.html>
- ▶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10491411/>
- ▶ [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7461218/pdf/PEDS\\_20193629.pdf](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7461218/pdf/PEDS_20193629.pdf)

# Questions





# Appreciation



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*a program managed by*



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240-645-1145

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