

# Social Communication/Autism Spotlight on: Adults



COMMUNICATION  
ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Better Hearing & Speech Month

**Adulthood typically brings numerous life milestones that may include leaving for and graduating from college, getting a job and advancing in a chosen career, living independently, and becoming involved in romantic relationships and/or getting married—to name a few. For people with social communication disorder or autism spectrum disorder, these milestones may bring challenges.**

**Transitioning Into Adulthood:** Many high school students with these disorders receive various types of services (including from speech-language pathologists) as required under federal special education law, which often do not continue after high school graduation—although, in some situations, these services can continue to age 21. This is part of the “services cliff”—a term used to describe the sudden drop-off in services—that those entering adulthood and their families face. Given that, transition planning is an important part of transitioning into adulthood.

### Special Considerations for Transitioning Youth and Postsecondary Students:

Support for transitioning individuals with autism and social communication disorder may include:

- **Transition Planning**—the development of a formal plan during the transition year of high school that includes identifying career goals and educational needs; providing career counseling and work experiences; and providing training in communication skills specific to academic, employment, and community settings.
- **Disability Support Services**—individualized support for college-level students that can include academic accommodations if needed and social communication supports (such as counseling or support groups).
- **Job Support Services**—including assessments to identify strengths that could be used in the workplace, career counseling, training in social skills for the workplace, résumé preparation, interview practice, job search and job placement, and on-the-job supports such as reasonable workplace modifications.
- **Housing**—including transition from the family home to a group home, semi-independent residence, or independent living environment.
- **Community Integration**—providing opportunities for social involvement and the development of friendships.

**New Diagnosis of Autism in Adults:** Growing awareness of autism has led to many young adults and adults who were never diagnosed to suspect they may be on the autism spectrum, according to the organization Autism Speaks. Some of these people may have autism—or a social communication disorder. For some adults, a diagnosis may mean access to services they didn’t previously qualify for or receive. Autism Speaks offers a guide for newly diagnosed adults with autism.

**Social Communication Disorder in Adulthood:** Social communication disorder can be acquired in adulthood following traumatic brain injury, aphasia, and neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease. Speech-language pathologists work with adults to improve conversational skills, navigate social situations, and encourage participation in daily activities to the fullest extent possible.



**Speech-language pathologists can help!**

Learn more at [www.asha.org/public](http://www.asha.org/public) and [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org).



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