**What is autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?**

ASD is a group of complex disorders of brain development. ASD can impact a person’s functioning at different levels, from very mildly to severely. There is usually nothing about how a person with an ASD looks that sets them apart from other people, but they may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most people. The thinking and learning abilities of people with an ASD can vary – from gifted to severely challenged. Autistic disorder is the most commonly known type of ASD, but there are others, including Asperger Syndrome.

**A person with ASD may:**

* Have trouble relating to others or not have an interest in other people at all
* Avoid eye contact and want to be alone
* Have trouble understanding other people’s feelings or talking about their own feelings
* Be very interested in people, but not know how to talk or relate to them
* Repeat or echo words or phrases said to them, or repeat words or phrases in place of normal language (echolalia)
* Repeat actions over and over again
* Have trouble adapting when a routine changes
* Have unusual reactions to the way things smell, taste, look, feel, or sound
* Have superior skill in a particular area such as painting, writing, math, music, history, electronics or composing
* Have difficulty working in a group
* Be extremely good at memorizing facts and information

**What causes ASD?**

Scientists do not know yet exactly what causes ASD. It appears to have a hereditary or genetic component where if you have a family member with an ASD, there may be an increased chance of developing an ASD.

**How can I help myself if I have ASD?**

Having an ASD means that your body and your brain sometimes work differently from that of other people. As a result, you may need strategies and items to help you be successful.

While in Job Corps, our goal is to help you understand and manage your condition so that you can move toward finding employment. Here are some things that might help:

* Learn as much as you can about ASD and how it impacts you
* Ask for reasonable accommodations, if needed
* **Put schedules in your phone**
* Create a personal list of important center rules to remember
* Participate in recreation/ exerciseprograms,
* Stay on your medications, if prescribed
* If your medication is making you feel strange or bad, please contact health and wellness staff
* Practice stress management techniques like deep breathing and meditation
* Ask for a positive peer mentor to help you in social situations in the dorm or cafeteria

**I know someone who has ASD. What can I do?**

* Accept that the person may act differently than you and be patient
* Do your best to remain calm if something unexpected happens
* When engaging in conversation, try to be very clear and specific
* If the person seems very stressed out or agitated, let the nearest Job Corps staff member know
* Access the Job Corps Safety Hotline (844-JC1-SAFE) via text, email, phone, mobile app or web site

Reference: Adapted from the Center for Disease Control "Autism Spectrum Disorder" Fact Sheet. Retrieved on June 25, 2019. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/autismfactsheet.pdf>