

## What Is Autism?

- Difficulties in communication & social interaction
- Repetitive behaviors & limited interests or activities

A spectrum disorder and symptom severity can and does vary greatly.

## Communication and Social Difficulty

- Verbal communication or spoken language
- Back and forth conversation
- Answering questions
- Following or understanding directions
- Guaging Personal space

## Behavioral Characteristics

- Uncomfortable in unfamiliar places
- Overwhelmed in social situations
- Difficulty transitioning from one area or activity to another
- Problems managing changes in routine or environment
- Difficulty responding to unexpected events
- Repeat words, phrases, makes unusual vocalizations
- Hand flapping, spinning, jumping, pacing
- Self-injurious behavior
- Fixate on topics of interest

## Sensory Differences

- Difficulty processing sensory input
- Can be over-responsive or under-responsive to stimuli in the environment
- Exposure to unpleasant stimuli often results in agitation and behavioral difficulties
- Some people with autism are bothered by:
  - Bright lights, loud noises, smells, large and crowded areas, certain types of touch
- Feel and smell of alcohol swab may be very unpleasant , may not like the feel of a band-aid
- Encourage use of fidget items when needed
- **Strategy: Explain what's coming before an intense sensory moment occurs/may occur**

## Strategies for Successful Vaccination

- Identify a point of contact within the vaccination clinic to address reasonable accommodation needs
- Identify accommodations needed prior to appointment
- Ask caregiver what is helpful, how best to communicate, favorite things to talk about, interests, what may be problematic
- Speak directly to individual whenever possible
- Use social stories and storyboards to explain what will happen before, during and after vaccination
- Provide extra time before and after the appointment
- Eliminate/minimize wait times in the clinic (separate line or check in, wait in car until a room is available)
- Provide individual rooms and a calm, quiet environment
- Talking Point: Consider room dividers if individual rooms is not available
- Minimize number of patients in clinic at one time
- Allow caregiver, support person, or emotional support animal to accompany individual
- Have sensory fidgets, tablets, noise cancelling headphones available

## Communication Strategies

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Use one step directions
- Allow additional time to respond to questions or directions
- Use pictures/communication board, ipad/tablet, smart phone
- Talk about topics of interest
- Use social stories and storyboards