

# MARSE Eligibility Criteria for ASD

## Observation & Data Collection Form

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### Qualitative Impairments in Reciprocal Social Interactions

#### 1. Marked impairment in the use of multiple nonverbal behaviors, such as eye-to-eye gaze, facial expression, body postures, and gestures, to regulate social interaction.

##### Probes

- Use of eye contact to engage the conversational partner?
- Use facial expressions to match the situation?
- Gesture to engage and influence?
- Demonstrate consciousness of physical proximity?

- Difference in eye-to-eye gaze** (e.g. seems to look “through” a person, limited or no eye contact or eye gaze to initiate, sustain, or guide social interaction, has fleeting or inconsistent eye contact)
  - Difference in facial expression** (e.g. lacks emotion or appropriate facial affect for the social situation, lacks accurate facial expression to reflect internal feelings, facial expressions seem rehearsed or mechanical, limited or no use of facial expression to guide communication)
  - Difference in body posture** (e.g. difficulty appropriate body space, awkward/stiff response or movement, gait challenge)
  - Differences in spontaneous use of gestures** (e.g. lacks understanding of the use of nonverbal cues (e.g. pointing, head nod, waving), does not respond to communication partner signals to start or end a conversation)
  - Other**
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#### 2. Failure to develop peer relationships appropriate to developmental level.

##### Probes

- Interact with peers in activities appropriate to developmental level?
- Appear indifferent to peers?
- Engage in developmentally appropriate activities?
- Appear attuned to the subtleties of interactions with peers?

- Lack of understanding of age-appropriate humor and jokes**
  - Disruption of ongoing activities when entering play or social circles; may insist on controlling the play when engaging with others**
  - Lack of initiation or sustained interactions with others**
  - Preference to play alone**
  - Continuous failure in trying to understand social nuances and follow social rules**
  - Desire for friendships but has multiple failed attempts**
  - Misinterpretation of social cues or communication intent of others**
  - Tolerance of peers but no spontaneous engagement in conversation or activity**
  - Confusion with the telling of lies**
  - Policing peers (e.g. reporting rule infractions on the playground)**
  - Other**
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**3. Marked impairment in spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interests, or achievements with other people (e.g. a lack of showing, bringing, or pointing out objects of interest).**

**Probes**

Approach or seek out another person?  
Approach another person to share something of interest?

- Deficits in the use of pointing to orient another to an object or event**
- Limited number of attempts to share achievements or items of interest with others as compared to peers**
- Bringing objects or items to others for the purposes of getting needs met, but not for a shared experience**
- Lack of response to others sharing enjoyment, interests, or achievements** (e.g. shifting conversations to one's own interest rather than responding to the interests of others)
- Other**

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**4. Marked impairment in the areas of social or emotional reciprocity.**

**Probes**

Take turns during conversation?  
Show empathy to match the mood of peer?  
Exhibit tolerance of changes of topic?  
Show an awareness of the partner's interests during conversation or play?

- Limited to no use of social smiling; rarely offers spontaneous social smiles**
- Lack of interest in the ideas of others**
- Aloofness and indifference toward others**
- Seemingly rude statements to others without filter or negative intent** (e.g. telling someone to stop eating chips because they are fat, as if they are doing that person a favor)
- Difficulty explaining their own behaviors in context of impact on others**
- Difficulty predicting how others feel or think**
- Problems inferring the intentions or feelings of others**
- Failure to understand how their behavior impacts how others think or feel**
- Problems with social conventions** (e.g. turn-taking, politeness, and social space)
- Lack of appropriate response to someone else's pain or distress** (e.g. laughing when others are upset)
- Creating arbitrary social rules to make sense of ambiguous social norms** (e.g. "All people fall into one of three categories: jocks, friends, or people who make bad decisions.")
- Other**

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## Qualitative Impairments in Communication

**1. Delay in or total lack of the development of spoken language not accompanied by an attempt to compensate through alternative modes of communication such as gesture or mime.**

### **Probes**

- Respond to other people? Communicate to request/protest?
- Gesture or take hand of an adult to direct the adult to a wanted item?
- Use eye gaze, vocalizations, facial gestures, signing or pictures to indicate wants?

- Pulling an adult to a particular area to get a snack or toy**
- Standing or screaming near the refrigerator in the absence of an adult**
- Use of words not directed at others** (e.g. gibberish, mumbling)
- Challenging behavior in lieu of alternate communication** (e.g. hitting, biting, pushing, screaming)
- Other**

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**2. Marked impairment in pragmatics or in the ability to initiate, sustain, or engage in reciprocal conversation with others.**

### **Probes**

- Provide sufficient background or reference information to partner to understand and participate in conversation?
- Use and react to nonverbal cues exhibited by other?
- Use vocabulary and knowledge base to express emotions/feelings in a variety of situations?
- Understand and use non-literal language (e.g. idioms or slang)?
- Discuss at length a single topic that is of little or no interest to others?

- Difficulty with the social aspects of language** (e.g. understanding non-literal language used in conversation)
- Issues with prosody** (e.g. flat and emotionless or high and pitchy with atypical rhythm or rate)
- Difficulty changing language according to the needs of the listener** (e.g. not giving background information to an unfamiliar listener or not speaking differently in a classroom than on a playground)
- Difficulty initiating, sustaining, or ending conversations with others**
- Difficulty using repair strategies when communication breaks down**
- Difficulty following the rules of conversations and storytelling** (e.g. taking turns in conversation, staying on topic, rephrasing when misunderstood, proximity, use of eye contact)
- Talking for extended periods of time about a subject of the student's liking, regardless of the listener's interest**
- Talking at someone in a monologue rather than conversing**
- Interpreting what others say according to the most basic or literal meaning**
- Other**

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### 3. Stereotyped and repetitive use of language or idiosyncratic language.

#### Probes

Display atypical communication such as echolalia, perseveration, and pronoun reversals?  
Speak with a flat, emotionless voice or with exaggerated inflection?  
Repeatedly use a limited number of utterances?

- Repeating words or phrases over and over
- Repeating what others say (echolalia) either immediately after the person said it or at some time in the future
- Repeating television or movie lines, song lyrics, or other media that are out of context and add no meaning to the conversation
- Use of words with a private meaning that only makes sense to those who are familiar with the situation where the phrase originated (e.g. every time the student enters the room he states, "That's right on the money!")
- Talking about a specific topic incessantly and out of context
- Overly formal use of words or expressions in conversation
- Other

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### 4. Lack of varied, spontaneous make-believe play or social imitative play appropriate to developmental level.

#### Probes

Play with toys as intended?  
Recognize the play repertoire of peers has changed?  
Participate in age-appropriate play?

- Lack of spontaneous pretend play with toys (e.g. using objects only as they are intended)
- Little elaboration on learned play schemes
- Lining up toys like cars or trains, stuffed animals, or action figures
- Focusing on only a part of the toy rather than actually playing with it (e.g. wheels on a toy car or train, the string of a pull toy) or focusing on the movement of the toy rather than the purpose of the toy; stacking blocks but not building anything
- Lack of finger play (e.g. "Itsy Bitsy Spider") imitation without specific teaching and prompts
- Limited play repertoires compared to peers (e.g. only plays with one specific toy or item)
- Lack of advancement of play repertoires over time (e.g. still playing with Thomas the Tank Engine while peers have moved on to LEGO® or board games)
- Rather than playing, directing peers to their assigned role in play
- Engages in construction play (e.g. puzzles, building blocks, assembling Transformers, LEGO® bricks, setting up elaborate train track layouts) at the exclusion of flexible representational play
- Other

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## Restricted, Repetitive, and Stereotyped Behaviors

### 1. Encompassing preoccupation with one or more stereotyped and restricted patterns of interest that is abnormal either in intensity or focus.

#### Probes

Exhibit an all-consuming, high interest in objects, topics, or themes beyond typical developmentally appropriate levels?

Have a restricted or narrow range of interests, including unusual interests, as compared to peers?

Show difficulty letting go of perseverative thoughts, activities, actions, or behaviors?

- Talking about a particular topic (e.g. The Weather Channel) incessantly without regard to the conversational partner
  - "Playing" with the same toy over and over again and in the same way each time
  - Incessantly seeking access to or talking about seemingly typical interests for age such as video games (e.g. Minecraft), topic areas (e.g. anime), and characters (e.g. SpongeBob or The Simpsons) but to the exclusion of most other topic areas or activities
  - Using a specific video game, television show, or movie as the lens through which experiences or the world are viewed
  - Excessively seeking access to or talking about atypical interests such as historical events (e.g. Siege of Malta), specific appliances (e.g. coffee machine or fan), or unusual types of animals (e.g. white Siberian tiger)
  - Excessively seeking access to or talking about interests atypical for age (e.g. the digestive system at age 4 or Thomas the Tank Engine at age 15)
  - Other
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### 2. Apparently inflexible adherence to specific, nonfunctional routines or rituals.

#### Probes

Use ritualistic actions or behaviors?

Rigidity in routine, difficulty with change and/or transitions?

Display an insistence on sameness?

- Wearing a specific clothing item for a specific day or activity
  - Rigid adherence to specific sequences in routines (e.g. eating food in a specific order, completing worksheets from the bottom or right side only)
  - Excessive and time consuming routines (e.g. bathroom, dressing)
  - Distress when daily routines and schedules are altered
  - Alphabetizing videos by the last name of the producer
  - Having unusual self-imposed rules (e.g. must pass three red cars before entering school)
  - Insistence that others follow rules, including rules made up by the student
  - Other
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**3. Stereotyped and repetitive motor mannerisms (e.g. hand or finger flapping or twisting, or complex whole-body movements).**

**Probes**

Display repetitive motor or vocal patterns such as flapping, rocking, pacing, humming, picking, or chewing?  
Use self-injurious behavior?

- Preoccupation with fingers, spinning, and twirling objects or self
- Pacing in a particular manner or routine
- Smelling, chewing, or rubbing objects in a particular manner
- Rocking or lunging
- Persistent grinding of teeth
- Repeated visual inspection of objects
- Self-injurious behaviors including head-banging, hand biting, and excessive self-rubbing and scratching
- Other

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**4. Persistent preoccupation with parts of objects.**

**Probes**

Twirl, spin, and/or bang objects in a hyper-focused manner?  
Fixate on how an object works rather than its function?

- A fascination with a specific part of the dishwasher or vacuum cleaner
- Spinning the wheels of a car
- Watching several seconds of a movie or cartoon over and over again, without watching the complete movie
- Completing complex puzzles with more interest in putting the pieces together than the puzzle picture as whole
- Other

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**Unusual or Inconsistent Response to Sensory Stimuli**

Students with ASD may seek or avoid certain sensory stimuli to a degree that it interferes with daily activities. Specific sensory areas can include sight, touch, hearing, smell, taste, and movement.

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