

NEWS RELEASE
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For immediate release

Sunrise Health Region Autism Spectrum Disorder Services

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurological disorder which causes developmental disability. Autism affects the way the brain functions, resulting in difficulties with communication and social interaction and unusual patterns of behavior, activities and interests and include three related disorders; autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder and pervasive development disorder-not otherwise specified. It is estimated that 1 in every 166 children in Canada has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The Children's Therapy program in Sunrise Health Region offers speech and language pathology, physical and occupational therapy for children and a new Autism Spectrum Disorder program. The focus of this new program is to coordinate with existing services and to provide evidence-based program to meet the needs of each individual.

"Our goal is to work with each individual diagnosed with ASD and their family to carry out a treatment plan based on family priorities and a comprehensive assessment of each child," said Jacquie Holzmann, Manager of the Children's Therapy Program with Sunrise Health Region. "By providing services to a variety of ages, from the early preschool years up to nineteen years of age, we are working to support the individual to meet the needs and challenges of daily life through encouragement, community awareness and development."

The Autism Spectrum Disorder program representatives focus on early intervention, evidence based treatments and supporting families in connecting with the supports that they identify are needed. Consultants can also provide screening for children whose families are concerned or are questioning whether their child has an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Symptoms of ASD may include signals in very young children that they are not reaching expected milestones such as responding to their name by 12 months of age, using their voices, using single words by the age of 16 months or if your child seems to lose previously developed language or social skills at any age. If you suspect that your child may have an Autism Spectrum Disorder, talk to your physician and ask to have your child screened.

Seeking support and intervention services early versus later will lead to better outcomes for individuals with an ASD. Support interventions for individuals with ASD can be delivered at an intensive level by coordinating with existing services in the region such as speech language pathology, occupational therapy, Parkland Early Childhood Intervention Program and Child and Youth Services, which already provide support to children and families throughout the Sunrise Health Region.

More information on the Autism Spectrum Disorder program and services is available by contacting the Children's Therapy Program Manager at 786-0178.

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For information about this news release or to arrange interviews, please contact Krista Just, Assistant Director of Communications 306.786.0753.

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