

NEWS

Age at autism diagnosis, first intervention drops to under 3 years

BY NIKO MCCARTY

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Growing numbers of autistic children are **diagnosed with the condition before age 3**, in the United States, and those diagnoses tend to precede the start of any interventions or developmental services, according to a new study based on parent surveys. Children traversing autism's 'diagnostic odyssey' a decade ago were typically diagnosed years later, and only after they had begun receiving services.

The analysis included data from 2,303 autistic children aged 2 to 17 years from the **National Survey of Children's Health**, which asks parents questions about the children in their household. The selected participants, split into three groups based on their age, either had a plan for early intervention or had received special services to meet developmental needs.

The oldest children, aged 12 to 17 at the time of the survey, had been diagnosed at about age 5 and a half years, on average. Their first intervention or developmental service occurred at around age 5.

By contrast, the youngest cohort, aged 2 to 5, had been diagnosed at about age 2 and a half years and started their first intervention or developmental services at roughly the same age.

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