

## **Framework: Difference/Disability**

A person may experience one or more of the features of autism to a greater or lesser degree. An altered developmental trajectory may result. The unique cognitive, linguistic, and social skills that come about can often obstruct learning and social interaction. At some point the total impact of these differences can significantly impede development. It may be determined that a person can no longer participate in learning and social interaction with peers. At this point specific treatment may be required as an intervention for the disability that has developed.

### ***Difference and Disability:***

#### **Difference:**

- Many individuals experience one or more of the features of autism.
- If there are few and they are minor then the person may be viewed by others as "different" or "unusual" or "quirky".
- Often a person who is highly intelligent or gifted in some way will also have some of the features of autism.
- The impact of these features of autism is minimal and learning and social interaction are not impeded to any significant degree.
- A person who does have some features of autism can be helped to compensate for them in the same manner as with other strong personality differences.
- Labeling an individual with the term "autism" may have unwanted affects that do not help the person to succeed.

#### **Disability:**

- For some individuals the impact of the features of autism that they experience occurs early in development and to a greater degree than with others.
- An altered path of development begins in the very early stages of growth. Learning from that point forward proceeds in a very different manner.
- These individuals struggle with learning and social interactions at a very young age.
- At this point specific treatment may be required as an intervention for the disability that has developed.
- These features of autism are often resistant to treatment and persist into adulthood.
- Support in all areas of life may be required to assist a person in the home, community, and the workplace.
- Labeling an individual with the term "autism" may be an appropriate and necessary step in securing services for treatment and care.
- At times the argument will be made that the features of autism only render a person different and that this difference is not a disability. A statement of this nature can be difficult for a family member/caregiver to understand when providing full care for a person who needs support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for a lifetime.

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