



*Home State Health denying Autism Spectrum Disorder (F84.0) without additional IQ diagnosis code
Effective 12/01/2017*

Autistic Disorder

Autism is a brain disorder that limits a person’s ability to communicate and relate to other people². Also known as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), the term “spectrum” reflects the wide variation in challenges and strengths possessed by each person¹. Some people can navigate their world, some have exceptional abilities, while others struggle to speak².

Symptoms of Autism

Signs of ASD tend to appear between 2 and 3 years of age and can include repeated motions and/or words, avoiding eye contact or physical touch, delays in learning to talk, and getting upset by minor changes². Additionally, some people with autism can experience physical symptoms such as constipation, sleep problems, poor coordination of muscles, and seizures². These signs, however, can also occur in children without ASD and at any age^{1,2}. It is important that caregivers talk with a healthcare provider to request a screening for autism.

Treatment of Autism

Treatment for ASD is dependent on screening results. A diagnosis of autism is not needed for people to begin receiving services related to developmental delays or learning challenges¹. Nonetheless treatments offered include behavior programs, individualized education program (IEP), medication, sensory processing, assistive technology, and diet².

TIPS:	ICD-10 Mapping & Education
➤ ICD-10-CM	F84.0 (Autistic disorder) ³
➤ Use additional code...	<p>... to identify any associated <u>medical condition</u> such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Constipation ○ Sleep problems ○ Poor coordination of muscles ○ Seizures <p>...and <u>intellectual disabilities</u> such as <u>IQ</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>F70</i> Mild (IQ 50-69) ○ <i>F71</i> Moderate (IQ 35-49) ○ <i>F72</i> Severe (IQ 20-34) ○ <i>F73</i> Profound (IQ under 20) ○ <i>F78</i> Other intellectual disabilities ○ <i>F79</i> Unspecified intellectual disabilities ○ <i>R41.83</i> Borderline intellectual functioning (IQ above 70-84)
➤ Avoid terms such as “history of”...	<p>... if patient is still being monitored for the condition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Incorrect</u> wording: <i>Patient has <u>history of</u> autism.</i> ○ <u>Correct</u> wording: <i>Patient has autism and continues medication.</i>
➤ Documentation & Coding Tips	<p>The following language supports actively monitoring [any] condition and must be documented by the provider. In the documentation, mention...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ if the patient is receiving therapy. ○ getting a refill on medication. ○ the status of the condition.

1. Autism Speaks: What is Autism? (<https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism>)
2. WebMD: What is Autism? (<http://www.webmd.com/brain/autism/ss/slideshow-autism-overview>)
3. 2017 ICD-10-CM Expert for Physicians: The Complete Official Code Set, Optum360. 2016 Optum360, LLC



Why is Home State Health requiring this change?

The intent is to get additional information. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) includes other neurodevelopmental disorders that are chronic life-long conditions. While there is no cure for ASD, there is a consensus that treatment must be individualized depending upon the specific strengths, weaknesses and needs of the child and family. The additional information that we are requiring would not only be following the ICD-10-CM guidelines but give us that additional information that we are seeking.

Per ICD-10-CM guidelines, F84.0 requires the use of additional codes that identify...

- Any associated medical conditions and/or
- Intellectual disabilities, such as IQ.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- 1. In order to determine which F-code to use, formal IQ testing would need to be completed by a psychologist or other qualified tester before coming to therapy. Many children have not undergone formal IQ testing and therapists are not qualified to assign that code based on clinical judgment. For the initial visit with the child, it is agreed that the IQ would most likely not be known, but F79 is an acceptable code according to ICD-10-CM guidelines. The thought process here being that it is known a developmental delay exists and as the child undergoes therapy, the actual IQ may be obtained at a later date.*
- 2. However, there are some children with Autism whose intellectual capacity is off the charts. What about these children who have no intellectual disabilities; those who have IQs that are record high? How do we code that? According to the ICD-10-CM book, R41.83 (borderline intellectual functioning, IQ above 70-84) is an acceptable code.*
- 3. What about the children with high intellectual capacity, but low emotional intelligence. How do we code for that? This is exactly what we are looking for—more specificity. F78 could be used in this example.*
- 4. Therapists and billing departments understand that there are many treatment diagnoses associated with Autism: **feeding delay, weakness, incoordination, behavior issues, speech and language delays, pragmatic issues, etc.** Diagnoses listed are great examples to bill on the claim. We would not otherwise know unless we pulled the chart. The health plan is here for our members; with more information we can look into additional resources for these members as there is increasing evidence that intervention is more effective when initiated as early as possible.*