



FROM: AUTISM SCIENCE FOUNDATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AUTISM SCIENCE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND CHIEF SCIENCE OFFICER
REACT TO NEW CDC REPORT SHOWING AUTISM PREVALENCE REMAINS
AT 1 IN 68**

***Calls for Improved Identification of Minority Children, Research into
Gender Differences, and Enhanced Services Infrastructure***

NEW YORK, NY (March 31, 2016) - Autism Science Foundation President Alison Singer today participated in a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) telephone briefing to discuss the CDC's latest autism prevalence report. The CDC reported that autism prevalence has remained steady at 1 in 68. "As prevalence figures start to plateau, we can better prepare to build out the infrastructure -- schools, and later adult housing and services -- that individuals with autism need and deserve," said Singer. She added that the numbers continue to reflect "a troubling disparity in diagnosis" with substantially more white than non-white children being identified.

Singer said that the new data should also inform the focus of autism research efforts moving forward. "The prevalence ratio of males to females remained unchanged from 2010 at 4.5 to 1. This is a central mystery about autism: Why are fewer girls diagnosed? Is there something about being male that confers risk, or is there something about being female that confers protection? Or, are girls just better at compensating for their symptoms? These are essential questions for researchers to explore."

Added Singer: "We must keep in mind today that we are talking about our children, our sons and daughters, not just numbers. This lack of change in prevalence gives us cause for optimism, but it doesn't give us cause for complacency. We must continue to push for more research and services for our loved ones with autism. We have a lot of work to do."

Reaction from Autism Science Foundation Chief Science Officer Alycia Halladay, Ph.D. :

“Today’s data reinforce our need to continue to fund research across different disciplines. This includes understanding the multiple risk factors associated with autism, providing better descriptions of the features of ASD across the lifespan, identifying people with autism earlier and better, gaining a clearer picture of why boys are diagnosed more often than girls, and importantly, making sure these scientific discoveries are put into the hands of service providers and families so that they can be used to help people with autism. All of these things will improve the diagnosis of ASD, lead to more targeted and effective interventions, and help those with a diagnosis go on to live the happiest lives possible.”

About the CDC Report:

According to the CDC report published today in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) Surveillance Summary, an estimated 1 in 68 (14.6 per 1,000) school-aged children have been identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

The data are from the CDC’s Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network, a tracking system that provides estimates of the prevalence and characteristics of ASD among 8-year-old children in 11 communities in 11 states: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Utah, and Wisconsin. The data in the latest report are for 2012.

According to the CDC, “although the average ASD prevalence of the 11 ADDM Network sites combined did not change between 2010 and 2012, ASD prevalence still varied widely between the 11 communities. Differences were seen by geographic region and between sites with different access to data resources.”

The report found that fewer than half (43%) of children identified with ASD receive developmental evaluations by age three.

About the Autism Science Foundation

The Autism Science Foundation (ASF) is a 501(c) (3) public charity. Its mission is to support autism research by providing funding to scientists and organizations conducting autism research. ASF also provides information about autism to the general public and serves to increase awareness of autism spectrum disorders and the needs of individuals and families affected by autism. To learn more about the Autism Science Foundation or to make a donation visit www.autismsciencefoundation.org.

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