**FAQS**

**What are the available services to diagnose autism?**

An Autism Diagnostic Team was formed in Southeast Kansas to provide diagnostic services for children and their families. The mission of the SEK Autism Diagnostic Team is to facilitate early identification of autism. Children evaluated by this team are seen by a physician, who determines if a diagnosis of autism is appropriate. This evaluation is *medical* in nature and is not the same as the psycho-educational evaluation that may be completed by a school district to determine if a child is eligible for special education services.

The evaluation involves a two-step process. The FIRST step is a comprehensive interview and observation-based assessment of the child completed by the diagnostic team. The physician is not present. Parents or other caregivers that are familiar with the child are interviewed to gather information that provides a complete picture of the child’s medical, developmental and current behavioral information. Information is also gathered by direct observation of the child using the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule-2 (ADOS-2), a semi-structured observation-based assessment that measures the child’s current communication, social interaction, play, and restricted and repetitive behaviors. Both the interview and administration of the ADOS-2 can be completed in one appointment, which takes approximately 1-2 hours.

The information that was gathered during the evaluation is compiled into a report that is sent to parent/caregiver and the designated physician within approximately two weeks. It is highly recommended that parents read the report and write down any questions he/she may have before the appointment with the physician.

The SECOND step involves meeting with the physician to review findings from the team’s evaluation, complete a physical examination of the child, and determine if additional testing (e.g., lead, genetic, and other medical tests) is needed. After the work-up is complete, the physician will make the final diagnosis.

**How do children get referred for a diagnostic evaluation?**

If a parent/caregiver, physician or teacher suspects a child has autism, the first step is to screen for autism by completing observations and norm-referenced rating scales. The screening process can be completed by the physician or school district and usually includes having both the teacher(s) and parent fill out a rating scale. If the screening shows positive results and the parent/caregiver want to pursue an evaluation, someone from the school will contact the parent to schedule an appointment with the Autism Diagnostic Team.

The parent/caregiver will also receive a packet of forms from CHCSEK in the mail, which include permission to test, confidentiality releases, insurance forms and developmental history. Regardless of doctor choice, all parents/caregiver will receive a packet from CHCSEK which will include, at a minimum, the confidentiality release and permission to test forms.

**Who provides this service?**

The SEK Autism Diagnostic Team is comprised of school personnel, which may include special education teachers, school psychologists, speech pathologists and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst who have received specialized training by doctors and psychologists at KU’s Center for Child Health and Development.

The Diagnostic Team has partnered with Dr. Susan Pence at the Community Health Center of SEK (CHCSEK) in Pittsburg, Kansas for patients who desire a traditional in-person experience and the physicians at University of Kansas Center for Child Health & Development in Kansas City, Kansas through the use of telemedicine.

The Autism Diagnostic Team is also willing to work with other physicians if the family desires to use their personal physician.

If the parent/caregiver chooses to have their child examined by doctors at CHCSEK or KU Telemedicine, a staff member from CHCSEK will contact the parent to schedule an appointment with the physician. The staff member will make this contact with the parent/caregiver after CHCSEK has received the Autism Diagnostic report AND the patient forms that were mailed to the parent/caregiver’s home.

The doctor’s appointment can usually be scheduled about one month after the evaluation. This may vary depending on the physician chosen and the availability of appointment times. To shorten the time between the evaluation and the appointment with the physician, Dr. Pence keeps Wednesday’s at 3:00 p.m. open for children being evaluated for autism. Appointments with KU Telemedicine may take longer to schedule.

If the parent chooses to use their own physician, they will be responsible for making the follow-up appointment with their physician and sharing the Autism Diagnostic report.

**What is telemedicine?**

During a telemedicine appointment, the family meets with the team of physicians at the University of Kansas Center for Child Health & Development through the use of interactive video technology. Telemedicine appointments can be scheduled locally at any community college, university or hospital. An in-person visit with a physician may still be needed for a physical examination or procedure.

**What is the cost for this service?**

The physician’s diagnostic evaluation is medically based; therefore, the child’s insurance will be billed for the physician’s examination of the child or the telemedicine appointment through KU’s Center for Child Health & Development. The insurance company will **not** be billed for the time that the ADOS-2 evaluation is completed by the diagnostic team.

For both telemedicine and tradition in-person visits, patients may still be responsible for deductibles, coinsurance, remaining balances, or co-payments. If the child’s health insurance carrier does not cover the cost of the appropriate services or the child has no insurance, the parent/caregiver will be responsible for any and all balances.

If the child does not have insurance or if a parent has questions regarding insurance coverage, contact Julie Laverack, pediatric care coordinator, at the Community Health Center of SEK at 620-231-9873. The Community Health Center of SEK is a federally qualified patient-centered health center dedicated to providing quality health care to everyone regardless of ability to pay.

**What happens after the diagnosis? If my child is found to have an autism spectrum disorder, will they qualify for special education services?**

Receiving a medical diagnosis of autism does not mean that the child will automatically be eligible for special education services in the school. To qualify for special education services, a school-based team must evaluate a child to determine eligibility. Eligibility requirements for schools are not the same as the requirements that apply for a medical diagnosis. For additional information on special education services, please contact the local school district.

If a child is diagnosed with autism, the child may be eligible for community-based services. The Community Developmental Disability Organization (CDDO) is the gatekeeper for services and will answer eligibility questions and provide information about available services for children. The CDDO of SEK can be reached at (620) 429-1212 for individuals who reside in Crawford, Cherokee and Labette counties and for individuals who reside in Neosho and Bourbon counties the Prairie Ridge CDDO phone number is (620) 431-7401.

Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) also provides an Autism (AU) waiver which provides support and training to parents of children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis to help ensure children with ASD can remain in their family home. To be eligible for the Autism waiver, an individual must meet the following criteria: 1) Must be 0-5 years old; 2) Be diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, Asperger’s Syndrome or a Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified; 3) Meet the level of care eligibility score; 4) Be financially eligible for Medicaid. The child’s physician can complete the documentation of autism form and assist in the application process or go directly to the KDADS website for more information. <https://www.kdads.ks.gov/commissions/home-community-based-services-(hcbs)/programs/autism>