

Parent Reactions to a Child's Disability - Reactions to a Child's Disability

Learn How Many Parents Respond to a Child's Disability

By [Ann Logsdon](#), About.com Guide

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Learning that your child has a disability can be one of life's most significant stressors. Parents' reactions to learning that a child has a [learning disability](#) can range from relief to despair and everything in between. Further, parents' responses may shift and change depending on many factors such as the level of disability, the family's coping skills, the parents' ability to work together to meet the needs of the child and of each other. Learn more about typical reactions parents may have.

1. Denial - Some Parents Deny Their Child Has a Disability

Denial is the refusal to acknowledge that the child has a disability. Parents in denial may make excuses for a child's school failure because they do not want to accept that a disability is present. They may blame school failure on teachers or a spouse. They may accuse the child of being lazy or refuse to allow special education services to be provided. Why does denial occur? It is profoundly frightening to some parents to acknowledge a disability exists. Denial is usually a sign of deep rooted fear that a disability means a child will fail in life. This often a parent's worst fear.

2. Anger - Some Parents Become Angry When a Child Has a Disability

Anger is a close cousin of denial because it is based on fear. Parents who are angry about their child's disability may blame schools or a spouse. That anger may come out in the form of criticism, a belief that the school system cannot serve the child adequately, and tense and difficult IEP team meetings. Why does anger occur? Like denial, anger is usually based on the fear that a child will not succeed in life. That often builds on fear that no one can or will help.

3. Grief - Some Parents Feel Grief over a Child's Disability

Grief is a powerful sense of loss that many parents feel when they learn their child has a disability. Grief may occur because a parent worries about the future. Grief may occur repeatedly throughout a disabled child's life if they fail to achieve various milestones and social rites of passage that other children typically achieve.

4. Relief - Some Parents Are Relieved to Learn Their Children are Disabled

Relief may be the last thing you would expect a parent to feel upon learning their child has a disability. But relief does happen, often because a formal diagnosis of a disability gives parents an explanation for the struggles their children have faced. Some parents are relieved because a diagnosis of a disability can qualify a child to receive special education accommodations and [specially designed instruction](#) on an [individual education program](#).

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More kids with disabilities in Minneapolis and St. Paul district schools than in area charters

By [Alleen Brown](#), [TC Daily Planet](#)

September 30, 2012

Twin Cities charter schools enroll a smaller proportion of special education students than St. Paul and Minneapolis district schools. The special education students who do attend charters tend to have less intense needs than the students with disabilities attending district schools. Why is this happening? And what does that difference mean for funding in district and charter schools?

Today's article looks at the numbers and at some of the reasons for the difference. The [next article in the series](#) looks at the practice of "counseling out" students with disabilities. In coming weeks, we will follow up with an article examining standard testing, students with disabilities, and school test scores. For more data on special education students in Twin Cities schools, [click here](#).

In Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) and St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS) combined, 18 percent of students received special education services last fall. In charter schools located in the two cities, only 12 percent of all students were in special education.

<http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/profiles/alleen-brown>

Helping Parents Deal with the Fact That Their Child Has a Disability

By: Bill Healey (1997)

Being told that your child has a disability can be as traumatizing as learning of a family member's sudden death. Many parents are stunned by such news. Receiving such a message can produce overwhelming emotions of shock, disbelief, anxiety, fear, and despair. Within that moment, research has shown that some parents cannot distinguish between the unconscious wish for an idealized normal child from an unthinkable, sudden reality of one who is not.

For some parents, just trying to comprehend the disparity between their desires for their child and the disability that exists compounds their emotional and intellectual efforts to adjust to the situation. They may feel grief, depression, or shame. Some may also ask questions of "why me" and conclude that they are being punished for sins or bad acts of the past. Depending on the severity of the disability and the magnitude of the demand for coping, a few parents may even contemplate death for the child or themselves. These thoughts represent an all-encompassing need to achieve inner peace.

<http://www.idonline.org/article/5937/>

Autism and the Somali Community

During the fall of 2008, the Minnesota Department of Health and the Somali community began a dialogue related to concerns expressed by the community about the number of preschool Somali children with a classification of autism in the Minneapolis Public Schools. During this process, a need for more information was identified. This Web page will be a portal for resources and information on autism for Somali families.

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/ommh/projects/autism/>

U to research rate of autism in Somali community

The Minnesota Department of Health will work in partnership with the University of Minnesota.

By **Aaron DuBois**

May 02, 2012

Parents and others in Minnesota's Somali community are concerned about the prevalence of autism in children. Now, for the first time, state funds will go to researching autism in that community.

The health and human services omnibus bill Gov. Mark Dayton signed Friday allocates \$200,000 to the Minnesota Department of Health to work with the University of Minnesota on the research.

Autism spectrum disorder is defined as "developmental disorders characterized by impairments in social skills and communication, and unusual repetitive or stereotyped behaviors," according to a 2009 MDH report. The range of disorders includes autistic disorder and Asperger's syndrome.

The rate of autism in Somalis is unusually high in Minnesota, said Idil Abdull, co-founder of the Somali American Autism Foundation and the mother of an autistic child.

Abdull said autism may not be accurately measured in Somalia, but she doesn't remember seeing a single case of it being diagnosed.

<http://www.mndaily.com/2012/05/02/u-research-rate-autism-somali-community>

Somali American Autism Foundation was started by Somali parents that were puzzled by the lack of a road map when a child is first diagnosed with autism. We came up with the name Somali because parents are from Somalia, American because our children are from America, Autism is what we are about and Foundation because we want to lay the foundation for finding out why the rate is so high among us.

<http://www.saafmn.org/>

An Outbreak of Autism, or a Statistical Fluke?

MINNEAPOLIS — Ayub Abdi is a cute 5-year-old with a smile that might be called shy if not for the empty look in his eyes. He does not speak. When he was 2, he could say “Dad,” “Mom,” “give me” and “need water,” but he has lost all that

He does scream and spit, and he moans a loud “Unnnnh! Unnnnh!” when he is unhappy. At night he pounds the walls for hours, which led to his family’s eviction from their last apartment.

As he is strapped into his seat in the bus that takes him to special education class, it is hard not to notice that there is only one other child inside, and he too is a son of Somali immigrants.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/17/health/17auti.html?pagewanted=all>

Why the High Autism Rate for Somali Children in Minneapolis?

by [Kristina Chew](#)

Back in [July of 2008](#), [MinnPost.com](#) reported a troubling finding, that first generation U.S.-born Somali-speaking children in Minneapolis schools were being disproportionately identified as having autism. Today, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) announced that it will be [conducting a study](#) as to whether or not there are unusually high rates of autism in Somali children in Minnesota. The [National Institutes of Health](#) and advocacy organization [Autism Speaks](#) are also working on the new study.

According to the Minnesota Department of Education, [back in 2008](#):

in the Minneapolis' early childhood and kindergarten programs, more than 12 percent of the students with autism reported speaking Somali at home. According to Minneapolis school officials, more than 17 percent of the children in the district's early childhood special education autism program are Somali speaking.

Read more: <http://www.care2.com/causes/why-the-high-autism-rate-for-somali-children-in-minneapolis.html#ixzz2BU2Sp6sg>