

Open letter to the Diagnostic & Statistics Manual committee about the upcoming potential changes they're making to the autism diagnoses in the DSM-V

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a licensed psychologist in California, with a specialty in autism spectrum disorders. I work with the "high functioning" population and am very concerned that this population of individuals will be excluded from much-needed services and supports as a result of the new criteria. What continually confuses me is the bias (in society?) to only serve those whose disabilities are most evident. I see this happening here in California with the blanket denial of services by many Regional Centers to individuals with a diagnosis of PDD-NOS or Asperger's Disorder. Are services not to be tied to the individual's need, rather than their label? While I realize that financial constraints play a role here and that monies have to be allocated to those in most need, it is precisely those individuals with the more "invisible" disabilities who can likely make an impact on society by becoming working, tax-paying citizens. However, without receiving initial supports (i.e., job coaching, job training, social and interview skills, etc.), many of those individuals will undoubtedly become dependent on public-funded services, working at jobs that are way below their capability, being unable to live on their own, and subsequently having the potential to be homeless after their parents die, all because they won't have the skills to thrive in the work place. With the rate increases we're seeing, I don't think this is a risk society can take.

I'm confident that you are taking the time to consider other options. While the system isn't perfect even today, at least some individuals with potential and need can have access to much-needed services. It's unfortunate that being tied to a label is what opens doors to services, but I think we're a long way from the alternative just yet. Thank you so much for your time, consideration, and the intense efforts you are making to improve our DSM.

Sincerely,

Sarita Freedman, PhD
Licensed Psychologist
Adults & Children, Developmental Disabilities