



## NEWS RELEASE

**Commissioner of Health  
Dr. Gale Burstein**

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### **CITING INCREASE IN INCIDENCE OF AUTISM, BURSTEIN URGES EARLY DETECTION**

*Health Commissioner Notes Autism, Related Spectrum Disorders Affecting More Children*

**ERIE COUNTY, NY**— Erie County Commissioner of Health Dr. Gale Burstein today called attention to a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that demonstrates a rise in the number of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). The report, presenting data collected in an Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network (ADDM) study, estimates overall ASD prevalence at 11.3 per 1,000 (one in 88) children aged 8 years old.<sup>1</sup>

Using data from 14 ADDM sites around the U.S., the report indicates that many children with ASDs do not receive a diagnosis until they reach preschool or kindergarten age, missing opportunities for earlier therapies that potentially could improve communication and socialization. The report also found that ASD prevalence varies by racial/ethnic group as well as by sex; approximately one in 54 boys and one in 252 girls living in the ADDM Network communities were identified as having ASD's. Based on the study, the estimated prevalence among non-Hispanic white children (12.0 per 1,000) was significantly greater than that among non-Hispanic black children (10.2 per 1,000) and Hispanic children (7.9 per 1,000).

"These numbers should serve as wake-up call to all parents and caregivers," **said Burstein.** "We are now seeing that autism and related spectrum disorders are nearly twice as common as they were only 5 years ago, and the incidence continues to rise. Early detection and treatment is imperative, as are supports for persons with ASDs and their families."

ASDs are a group of developmental disabilities characterized by impairments in social interaction and communication and by restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behavior.<sup>2</sup> Symptoms usually are apparent before 3 years of age. However, tracking the prevalence of ASDs over time is challenging because of the complex nature of the disorders, a lack of biologic markers for diagnosis, and changes in clinical definitions over time.

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<sup>1</sup> Estimated prevalence of autism spectrum disorders (ASD's) per 1,000 children aged 8 years, by sex and race/ethnicity—Autism and Developmental Disorders Monitoring Network, 14 sites, United States, 2008

<sup>2</sup> American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC; American Psychiatric Association; 2000

“Just as the incidence of these disorders continues to rise, we must be increasingly vigilant in watching for their symptoms,” **added Burstein**. “Be on the lookout early in the child’s life. Parents who notice stereotypical signs, such as flapping hands, inappropriate vocalizations, or compulsive behavior, should discuss their concerns with their child’s primary care provider. Autism spectrum disorders, however, are individualized in their presentation; every caregiver should pay close attention to their child’s ability to communicate, socialize, and interact with others in ways that are appropriate for their age.”

Locally, the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Summit Walk for Autism Awareness is scheduled for Saturday, April 28, 2012. The goal is to raise \$250,000 to support agency programs. Visit [www.summitwalk.org](http://www.summitwalk.org) for more information.

**For more information:**

On Erie County Health programs visit:

<http://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=special-needsearly-intervention-program>

On Autism spectrum disorders general information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/index.html>

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

<http://www.autism-society.org>

On the Prevalence of Autism Disorders report visit

[http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6103a1.htm?s\\_cid=ss6103a1\\_e](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6103a1.htm?s_cid=ss6103a1_e)

On information regarding educational resources:

<http://www.summited.org>

**Description of ADDM system:** the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network is an active surveillance system that estimates the prevalence of ASDs and describes other characteristics among children aged 8 years whose parents or guardians reside within 14 ADDM sites in the United States. ADDM does not rely on professional or family reporting of an existing ASD diagnosis or classification to ascertain case status. Instead, information is obtained from children’s evaluation records to determine the presence of ASD symptoms at any time from birth through the end of the year when the child reaches 8 years of age. ADDM focuses on children aged 8 years because a baseline study conducted by CDC demonstrated that this is the age of identified peak prevalence. ADDM, created by the Children’s Health Act of 2000<sup>3</sup>, is the only collaborative network in the U.S. estimating the prevalence of ASDs. A full listing of ADDM sites can be found at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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<sup>3</sup> HR 4365, 106<sup>th</sup> Cong, 1999-2000. Children’s Health Act of 2000. Available at <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h106-4365>.