

# Adult Diagnosis Tool Kit



## Why adults might seek an autism diagnosis:

There has been a significant increase in adults seeking an autism diagnosis in the last few years. This increase is a result of multiple factors such as better awareness and acceptance of what autism is, including how broad the spectrum truly is. Medical providers have also gotten better at identifying people of color and females, who were largely underrepresented in the autism community. Lastly, with the changes to the diagnostic criteria, more individuals who are labeled “mild” now qualify for a formal diagnosis. This has created a surge in adults questioning whether they should pursue a formal assessment and diagnosis for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Adults often choose to seek a formal autism diagnosis for a variety of reasons, including:

- Difficulty understanding and abiding by social rules and relationships
- Significant problems with executive functioning and organization
- Notable sensory sensitivities to sounds, textures, food, etc.
- Difficulty maintaining a job due to lack of neurotypical social skills
- Feeling a sense of not belonging or not having any meaningful relationships with others
- Desire to better understand adolescent and childhood struggles

## The difference between formal and self-diagnosis:

When seeking a formal autism diagnosis, individuals may experience obstacles such as finding an experienced provider, long wait lists and high costs associated with the assessment. Before seeking a formal diagnosis, it is important to understand the difference in services and resources that are available.

Because there are barriers to getting a formal assessment, some individuals who not do see a need for disability-based services may choose to claim an autism identity through self-diagnosis. Claiming a self-diagnosis of autism gives people a label that they identity with and can share to describe aspects of their personality or behaviors. Below is a chart that shows what individuals can access with a formal diagnosis of autism or self-diagnosis.

Resource/Service	Formal Diagnosis	Self-Diagnosis
Access to accommodations in post-secondary education	✓	
Access to services through Board of Developmental Disabilities	✓	
Eligible to receive SSI	✓	
Eligible to open a STABLE account	✓	
Protection under ADA and access to work-based accommodations	✓	
Sense of self-awareness	✓	✓
Access to support groups	✓	✓
Access to online communities	✓	✓
Access to mental health services	✓	✓

## What is an autism assessment?

An assessment for a formal autism diagnosis can be performed by a psychologist or psychiatrist who offers adult assessments. Contacting a local autism agency like Milestones may be helpful in locating providers in the area.

How to Be Ready for an Autism Assessment (with pictures) - wikiHow [<https://www.wikihow.com/Be-Ready-for-an-Autism-Assessment>]

Individuals who choose self-diagnosis are still members of the autism community. Self-diagnosis is helpful if the individual is not currently insured; however, there is no harm in identifying as autistic while waiting for a formal diagnosis. There are several websites that can be found on the internet with self-diagnoses quizzes – the best way to establish an informal diagnosis is by looking over the formal diagnostic criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## How Milestones can assist you:

Individuals who are interested in seeking a formal diagnosis or connecting to resources for those who self-identify should contact the Milestones Helpdesk to get connected to the most appropriate resources for them. To get started, please visit [milestones.org/services/helpdesk](https://milestones.org/services/helpdesk).

## Additional Resources:

Welcome to the autistic community – Guide: Welcome to the Autistic Community | The Arc’s Autism Now Center [<https://autismnow.org/resources/guide-welcome-to-the-autistic-community/#:~:text=Guide%3A%20Welcome%20to%20the%20Autistic%20Community.%20This%20handbook%2C,without%20ASD%3B%20and%20discusses%20the%20reasons%20why%20>]

Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN) [<https://autisticadvocacy.org/>]

Autism and Race [<https://autismandrace.com/>]

Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network [<https://awnnetwork.org/>]

Asperger/Autism Network [<https://www.aane.org/resources/adults/aspergerautism-spectrum-diagnosis-adults/>]