

Bullying and Autism Spectrum Disorder

Are you the parent of a child or youth who has been diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome or Autism? Researchers from York University, Dr. Jonathan Weiss and Catherine Cappadocia, are conducting a nation wide study to investigate bullying experiences among children and youth diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). There is currently little research on this topic despite anecdotal evidence that suggests it is a very important issue for children and youth with ASD. This study will identify factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of bullying and investigate the impact of bullying on the mental health of children with ASD.

Please take 30 minutes to complete an important survey about bullying! As a first step towards a better understanding of bullying and victimization among children and youth with ASD, parents can complete this survey online. Parents will be asked to talk about their child's experiences with bullying, school situation, and diagnosis and symptoms of Asperger syndrome or Autism. Parents will also be asked their own perspective on their child's health and behaviour and how this makes them feel.

Survey results will be used to support school and community programs for children and youth with ASD. The knowledge gained through this study will contribute to the development of future bullying prevention and intervention programs across Canada. This project was approved by the York University Research Ethics Board.

Thank you in advance for your consideration! As a token of our appreciation, all survey participants will be entered into a draw for \$300.

To learn more about the survey or to participate, please click here:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=bZg3nLA_2bQWdW_2bl_2fz_2bbXchw_3d_3d

You can also see the other projects we have for families of people with ASD by going to the website: www.familyprojects.ca

Description of the Bullying and ASDs Project

This study will investigate bullying experiences among children and youth diagnosed with Asperger syndrome and Autism across Canada. Little research has been conducted to explore bullying within this population of children and youth; however, anecdotal evidence suggests that this is an important issue for children who have been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), as well as their parents. Also, research examining the prevalence of bullying among children with exceptionalities suggests that children and youth with ASDs may be at an increased risk of being bullied

compared to typically developing peers. This is likely the result of their challenges with social functioning and behaviour.

The current study is the first to examine the factors that may lead to bullying for youth with ASDs, as well as the impact of bullying on their mental health. We also aim to determine the protective factors that can keep a child with an ASD mentally healthy in the face of bullying. The main constructs we are investigating in our study are as follows: experiences with bullying, ASD symptomology, emotional and behavioural functioning, family empowerment, and parent affect, as well as parent experiences with and acceptance regarding their child with an ASD.

We intend to survey a large sample of parents of children with ASDs across Canada to understand this topic from the perspective of the primary caregiver. Participants will be parent caregivers of children and youth with ASDs between 5 and 21 years of age. We hope to recruit 200 parents and expect that more mothers than fathers will participate. Parents will live in Canada and will be able to respond to the questionnaires online or by mail. Participants will be recruited electronically. Invitations to participate in the online survey will be posted on the websites of Autism and Asperger advocacy groups across Canada and will be circulated via email list serves through these organizations. This preliminary work will lay the foundation for more in depth explorations of bullying from the point of view of the child, the parent, and the teacher.