

# Autism Clinical Center



A State of Missouri Center of Excellence  
for Autism Diagnosis

A Clinical Program of the William Greenleaf Eliot  
Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry



<http://wuchild.wustl.edu/acc>

## About the Autism Clinical Center

The State-of-Missouri / Washington University Autism Clinical Center fulfills a unique role in addressing the needs of individuals and families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders in our community. Services include:

- Diagnostic Assessment
- Comprehensive Intervention Planning
- Applied Behavior Analysis / Positive Behavior Support Plans by Board Certified Behavior Analysts
- Parent-implemented Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention (birth-2 years)
- Psychiatric Intervention
- Interface with clinical programs of unique expertise in the Washington University / St. Louis Children's Hospital Environment. These areas of expertise include:
  - Epilepsy
  - Augmentative Communication
  - Occupational Therapy
  - Clinical Genomics

The Autism Clinical Center at Washington University in St. Louis is one of 5 Missouri Autism Centers of Excellence.



The Autism Clinical Center is located within the **Child and Family Development Center**  
4444 Forest Park Avenue, suite 2600  
St. Louis, MO 63108

**Appointments** are scheduled via referral by a patient's primary care physician.

Phone: (314) 286-1700; Email:

[PsychiatryScheduling@psychiatry.wustl.edu](mailto:PsychiatryScheduling@psychiatry.wustl.edu)

## Diagnosis and Comprehensive Intervention Planning

Intervention planning for individuals affected by autism and related disorders hinges on accurate diagnosis, not only with respect to autism itself, but with respect to the many conditions that can complicate the life and development of an individual affected by ASD.

There are three foundations of accurate diagnosis in ASD: Developmental History, Symptom Burden, and Expert Clinician Appraisal of the role of ASD (versus that of other possible conditions and factors) in the symptoms experienced by a patient. All are systematically evaluated and tracked in the Autism Clinical Center.

Intervention planning at the Autism Clinical Center is consistently re-evaluated because a patient's response to an individual plan can guide the development of a better, more refined plan. Moreover, optimal intervention changes with the growth and development of the patient; typically patients are re-evaluated at key junctures: school entry, the onset of adolescence, and the transition to adulthood.



## A Personalized-Medicine Approach

The frontier of personalized medicine in autism depends upon comprehensive characterization of:

- Autism Symptom Burden
- Co-Occurring Conditions
- Genetic Background
- Impairment in Adaptive Functioning
- Critical Elements of the Environment
  - Family
  - Academic Setting (IEP)
  - Social and Cultural Context
  - Occupational / Vocational Opportunity



All are considered in the approach to intervention planning for every patient, and the plan for each patient invokes every aspect of intervention from which he/she can benefit, including the specialty medical services of the Washington U. / St. Louis Children's Hospital environment.

## Child Psychiatric Care

The ACC is a clinical program of the William Greenleaf Eliot Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Washington University. It is common for neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism to be complicated by behavioral symptoms that can be extremely impairing and potentially treatable. These include anxiety, aggression, mood instability, and hyperactivity. A unique strength of the ACC is its complement of child psychiatrists, psychologists, and nurse practitioners who guide the development and continuous refinement of intervention plans that directly address these complications of autism.

## Behavioral Support

ABA is a therapeutic paradigm that creates behavior change through positive reinforcement, environmental modification, and judicious data collection to continuously refine and improve the approach to an individual patient. ABA can help a young child acquire new developmental competencies, and can help older children, adolescents, and adults reduce problem behaviors that interfere with adaptation at home, in school, or in the community. Specific services that are provided by Board Certified Behavior Analysts in the ACC include:

- Functional Behavior Assessment and Analysis
- Expert Review of an existing behavioral plan
- Specification and guidance for Applied Behavior Analysis Therapy
- Participation in the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
- Positive Behavior Support Planning
- Daily Living Skills Assessment

For all patients, ABA is integrated with the interdisciplinary care of our team.



## Early Intervention EPIC-ITAP

The Early Preventive Intervention Clinic – Infant Toddler Autism Program for Infants/Toddlers with ASD and their Parents (EPIC-ITAP) is a specialized service within the Autism Clinical Center. It serves infants and toddlers in the first and second year of life who have been diagnosed, suspected, or are at risk for an autism spectrum disorder. The service provides an individualized, state-of-the-art roadmap for parents to support their child's early cognitive, social, and emotional development. A highly trained team representing the disciplines of psychology, occupational therapy, and behavior analysis deliver the EPIC-ITAP intervention in close partnership with parents over a period of 16 weeks.



Specialized assessments can inform the development of clinical intervention plans for young children. These are provided in a dedicated Developmental and Behavioral Assessment Unit (DBAU) within our Center. The DBAU provides in-depth measurement of cognition, development, and behavior using standardized ratings provided by personnel who are specially trained and certified for their use.