

## **A GUIDE TO COMMUNICATION IN INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM**

Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD is a complex developmental disability in children which results in delays in many areas of development. One of the primary symptoms of Autism is problems with communication.

Almost all Autistic children have difficulties understanding and using verbal and non-verbal language. Some children may be dependent on nonverbal means of communication and rely on gestures, pictures and/or assistive devices to make their wants and needs known. Some children are highly verbal but may still have difficulties interacting and talking with others. These difficulties often result in struggles engaging in play and conversations with peers. Many Autistic children struggle to make friends and socialize or engage with their peers. Their play skills are typically delayed and children with Autism will often play alone and/or play with toys in very different ways.

There are many options for intervention and many different therapies are available to help children with Autism. The involvement of a Speech-Language Pathologist in a therapy program can be very beneficial. Getting that help early is very important. Below is a list of "red flags, or characteristics of children with Autism. Every child is different, but if you think your child is showing any of these characteristics, talk to your Family Physician or your child's Paediatrician as soon as possible. They can direct you to the appropriate services, including the services of a Registered Speech-Language Pathologist.

### **EARLY INDICATORS OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER**

- ▶ **does not babble, point or use meaningful gestures by age 1**
- ▶ **does not speak one word by 16 months**
- ▶ **does not combine 2 words by 2 years**
- ▶ **does not respond to name**
- ▶ **loses language and/or social skills**
- ▶ **lack of pretend play**
- ▶ **shows behaviour and emotional differences**