

Marcus Autism Center Summer 2018 Newsletter



NIH Autism Center of Excellence Grant

We are thrilled to share that Marcus Autism Center has been chosen again by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as an Autism Center of Excellence (ACE) and will receive research funding from 2017 to 2022. The ACE designation supports large-scale multidisciplinary studies on autism spectrum disorder (ASD), with the goal of identifying contributing causes and best treatments for ASD.



We are one of only five centers to receive this designation and will receive a grant of \$11.25 million over the next five years. It is the most prestigious recognition in ASD research, and will yield new insights into causes and interventions. More information can be found at marcus.org/ace.

Over the next five years, our team will study the development of both the brain and behavior in 250 human infants, as well as 15 infant monkeys. The five grant-associated projects span from genes to neighborhoods, aiming to generate new scientific discoveries and ultimately lead to a community-based system of healthcare delivery for infants and toddlers with autism and their families.

The five individual research projects included in the ACE grant are as follows:

- Project 1:** Social visual engagement in infants
- Project 2:** Spoken communication between infants and caregivers
- Project 3:** Neuroimaging of infant brain development
- Project 4:** New treatment models for infants
- Project 5:** Model system of social behavior

Interested in Helping with Research?

We are committed to providing the best possible care for children living with ASD now as well as transforming the future of ASD through research. We're always looking for new participants in our research studies – particularly for our new ACE grant! If you might be interested, please visit marcus.org/research or call **404-785-7600** to learn more about our research program and opportunities for involvement.

We also have openings in our inclusive educational preschool, for 2 or 3-year-old children with or without ASD. We focus on social and emotional skills for all children. See marcus.org/preschool for more information.

2018 Autism Speaks Walk



A huge thanks to everyone who donated, fundraised, volunteered, or came out to the 2018 Autism Speaks Walk. Our overall Marcus-Children's team raised nearly \$30,000 this year, including the sale of more than 250 t-shirts and building-wide fundraisers by several teams. We could not have done it without your support!.

Thank you!



The Latest on Autism Diagnoses

Every two years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) publish a large monitoring study on the prevalence of ASD. In April 2018, their data suggest the prevalence of ASD increased in the most recent CDC report from 1 in 68 to 1 in 59. This trend, based on findings from 11 sites, may be due to an increase in the diagnoses of non-white populations, as the disparity in diagnoses between white, black, and Hispanic children has decreased since the last report.

There are still several gaps to bridge: for example, only 42% of children with ASD had a diagnostic evaluation by age three, despite twice that percentage showing signs by that age. Marcus Autism Center performed nearly 1,400 diagnostic evaluations last year, and is a global leader in early diagnostic methods.

