

# What is Autism?

The correct term for Autism is now **Autism Spectrum Disorder** or **ASD**. Autism is called a “spectrum” disorder, because how it affects people can vary widely. Some of the individuals with **ASD** are severely affected, are non verbal and will require life long care. However, many people with **ASD** have average to above average intelligence, can be successful academically and may be able to live independently. These individuals are often termed “High Functioning” (**HFA**), or “Aspergers” after Hans Asperger who first described this syndrome. Nevertheless, people with **HFA** have difficulty in interpreting social clues, may have problems with verbal communication and trouble “fitting in”. The result is that only about 20% of adults with **HFA** are employed, and many are under-employed in low skill jobs that do not utilize their intelligence and talents. **The Specialists Guild** is focused on helping people on the higher end of the Autism Spectrum, since government services are typically not available to people who are not also intellectually or physically impaired.

The diagnosis of Autism has steadily increased in the past 20 years. The latest CDC studies suggest that 1 of every 50 babies born in America today is on the Autism Spectrum. These babies will become adults. Successful integration of individuals with **HFA** into our society, and into the work force, is a critical issue from both an economic and a human rights perspective. **The Specialists Guild** is working towards the goal of getting society to recognize the value of people on the Autism Spectrum - **Focus on Ability**, not disability!