

## Background

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by social impairments and the presence of repeated behaviors and restrictive interests (American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic Statistical Manual- IV, 2013)



## Purpose

**Aim 1:** Identify and critically examine disparities in diagnosis and treatment among children from historically underserved communities.

**Aim 2:** Explore research initiatives designed to mitigate the negative consequences of these disparities.

**Aim 3:** Identify barriers that families from underserved populations may face when seeking treatment

## Literature Review Search Strategy

### Databases:

- APA PsycArticles
- APA PsycINFO
- Education Database
- Education Full Text
- ERIC

### Key Words:

- Autism/ASD
- Underserved Population
- Racial/Ethnic Group
- Disparity
- Bias

## Diagnostic and Treatment Disparities

### DIAGNOSTIC DISPARITY:

- Age at first diagnosis is later for non-white children and those from lower SES groups. (Maenner et al., 2020; Mandell et al., 2007)

### Bias in Clinical & Diagnostic Procedures

- Practitioners less likely to complete the screening process for non-white children (Carbone et al., 2020)
- Black children more likely to be diagnosed with conduct disorder than white peers in place of an official ASD diagnosis (Mandell et al., 2007)
- Screening tools were largely developed for majority white-middle class patients (Coulter et al., 2022)



### TREATMENT DISPARITY:

- White children more likely to receive more intensive services than their non-white peers (Yingling et al., 2019)

### Recommendation & Utilization Disparity

- Resources less accessible and recommended less often to non-white families (Ladarola et al., 2019; Tomczuk et al., 2021)
- Disparity utilization rates for underserved groups persist across sub-specialty services (Liptak et al., 2008; Magana et al., 2016)

## Research Addressing Disparities

### Diagnostic Materials and Procedures

- *Developmental monitoring*
- *Two-Level Screening*
- *New Screening Measures*

### Interventions

- *Culturally Responsive/Adaptive Interventions*
- *Parent-Implemented Interventions*

## Barriers to Receiving Treatment

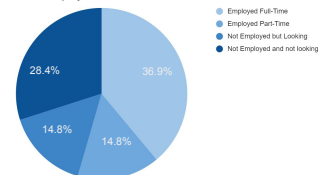
### National Survey for Children's Health (NSCH; U.S. Census Bureau, 2022)

N = 176 ethnically diverse, lower income families with autism

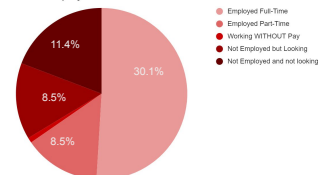
- While 98.9% of families said their child had insurance, only 58% reported it covered necessary services.
- Out of 85 parents who needed referrals for their children's services, 39 (45.9%) faced challenges obtaining them.
- 50% (88) of parents reported feeling frustrated in their efforts to receive services for their children

## Barriers to Receiving Treatment cont.

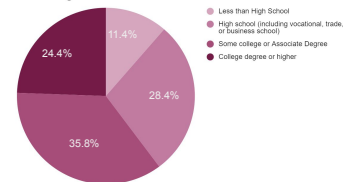
Parent 1 Employment Status



Parent 2 Employment Status



Parent Highest Level of Education



## Discussion

- These inequities are unacceptable, and while work is being done to mitigate them, there are still barriers to accessing treatment which need to be addressed
- Future research should look to address these barriers before developing treatments
- Current treatments lack attention to strengths-based approaches (e.g. resilience) which may prove fruitful for underserved communities