

AUTISM DIAGNOSES AND QUALIFICATIONS

There are two ways to receive a label of autism: one is through the school system and the other is through the medical system. In addition to these formal ways of being identified, a person can also self-diagnose, or determine for themselves that they are autistic. It's important to know the differences between each one and how each works.

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS

SELF DIAGNOSIS

Who gives the label?	A team of multidisciplinary school professionals.	A therapist or mental health professional.	An individual who believes they are autistic.
What services does the label give you access to?	Special education services, specifically an Individualized Education Program (IEP) containing goals and objectives, along with accommodations, modifications, and supports.	Services covered by insurance, like individual therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, or medication.	No services are covered through self diagnosis, however some events/resources are open to self-diagnosed autistics.
What criteria does it use?	Criteria provided by the Minnesota Department of Education. Includes the requirement that the student <i>must</i> need special services in school.	The DSM-5, which is used to diagnose mental health conditions in the United States.	There is no standardized set of criteria for self diagnosis. Typically, people use internet information or the DSM-5.
Who is eligible for this label?	Children ages 3-21. Younger children may qualify if receiving Early Intervention services.	People of any age and background.	People of any age or background.
When/why would you pursue this label?	Parents or teachers will ask for this label if a child is struggling in school and needs support. Even if a child already has a medical diagnosis, it does not guarantee that they will receive an educational qualification.	People pursue medical diagnosis to get access to insurance coverage for services, to qualify for state/county disability supports, to be legally protected under the ADA in housing, employment, etc. or for personal understanding.	People pursue self diagnosis to improve their self understanding, to find community, and to help themselves find appropriate supports and accommodations.