

Autism Speaks, First Signs, and Florida State University to Collaborate on Web-Based Autism Video Glossary

An Innovative New Tool to Help Parents Learn the Early Signs of Autism

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NEW YORK, NY — Autism Speaks, a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing awareness of autism and raising money to fund autism research, together with First Signs, the leader in early identification and intervention of children with developmental delays and disorders, and Florida State University today announced they would collaborate to build a web-based video glossary to help parents learn more about the early warning signs of autism. The glossary will contain more than 125 video clips and will be available to the public free of charge early next year at <http://www.autismspeaks.org/>, <http://www.firstsigns.org/>, and <http://firstwords.fsu.edu/>.

The goal of the project is to help parents better understand some of the words and terms they might hear used in association with a diagnosis of autism or by an educator. Video clips will be used to show examples of such terms as social reciprocity, joint attention, sensory defensiveness, hand flapping, and echolalia. In most cases, side-by-side video clips will show behaviors that are typical in contrast with those that are red flags for autism. Video clips will also give parents short windows into the different types of therapies available for children with autism.

“Sometimes text is not enough,” said Alison Singer, senior vice president of Autism Speaks. “Our hope is that parents will use this tool to help them better understand behaviors they see in their children and to learn more about terms that have been used by doctors or educators so that they can be the best possible advocates for their children.”

“The goal of this project is to facilitate earlier diagnosis and intervention for children with autism,” said Nancy D. Wiseman, president of First Signs. “Right now, early intervention is the best weapon we have against autism.”

Renowned autism researcher, professor, and Director of the Florida State University FIRST WORDS Project, Amy M. Wetherby, PhD, will oversee the selection of appropriate and descriptive video clips.

ABOUT AUTISM

Autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that impairs a person's ability to communicate and develop social relationships, and is often accompanied by extreme behavioral challenges. Autism spectrum disorders are diagnosed in one in 166 children, affecting four times as many boys as girls. The diagnosis of autism has increased tenfold in the last decade. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have called autism a national public health crisis whose cause and cure remain unknown.

ABOUT AUTISM SPEAKS

Autism Speaks is dedicated to increasing awareness of the growing autism epidemic and to raising money to fund scientists who are searching for a cure. It was founded in

February 2005 by Suzanne and Bob Wright. Bob Wright is Vice Chairman and Executive Officer, General Electric, and Chairman and CEO, NBC Universal. Autism Speaks and the National Alliance for Autism Research (NAAR) recently combined operations, bringing together two of the leading organizations dedicated to accelerating and funding biomedical research into the causes, prevention, treatments and cure for autism spectrum disorders; to increasing awareness of the nation's fastest growing developmental disorder; and to advocating for the needs of affected families. To learn more about Autism Speaks, please visit www.autismspeaks.org.

ABOUT FIRSTSIGNS®

First Signs, Inc. is a national non-profit organization dedicated to educating parents and professionals about the early warning signs of autism and other developmental disorders. It was founded in 1999 by Nancy D. Wiseman, former marketing executive, parent of a child with autism, and author of *Could It Be Autism? A Parent's Guide to the First Signs and Next Steps*. First Signs provides professionals with tools and training and parents with education and support to help young children stay on a healthy developmental path. To learn more about First Signs, please visit <http://www.firstsigns.org/>.

ABOUT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY'S FIRST WORDS PROJECT®

The FIRST WORDS Project is a prospective, longitudinal research investigation at Florida State University designed to identify early red flags of autism spectrum disorders from videotapes of children screened under 24 months of age who are later diagnosed with autism. As Principal Investigator, Dr. Wetherby has received funding from the US Department of Education, National Institutes of Health, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The research findings will have important implications for improving early screening and evaluation tools. To learn more about the FIRST WORDS Project, please visit <http://firstwords.fsu.edu/>