

Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) Module 1 Pre-Verbal/Single Words; The ADOS is a structured observation assessment designed to evaluate joint referencing, social relatedness, and communication skills. Additionally, this measure allows for evaluation of restrictive interests, and repetitive and socially maladaptive behaviors.

GIRL was administered the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS), which is a semi-structured, standardized assessment of communication, social interaction, and play for use with individuals with possible autism spectrum disorders. The ADOS has demonstrated utility in distinguishing between those children who have autism spectrum disorders from those who may have other developmental difficulties. The evaluation consists of a series of activities that permit observation of behaviors specific to autism spectrum disorders. GIRL was given Module 1, which is designed for children whose spontaneous language is primarily in single words or through behavioral means. It consists of multiple play based activities with accompanying behavioral ratings.

During the ADOS, GIRL spoke in single words with a few two word phrases. She primarily used language to indicate requests, say thank you, and label objects. GIRL used a variety of gestures, including a few signs (e.g., I want). Although she pointed to objects, she did not tend to coordinate her eye contact with another person when pointing. She frequently echoed the clinician's language.

In the domain of reciprocal social interaction, GIRL had difficulty modulating her eye for social purposes. She used eye contact and also vocalizations to make social overtures when highly motivated. However, she did not consistently coordinate gaze with her vocalizations. GIRL directed some facial expressions in order to communicate emotions. She demonstrated strengths in her responsivity to social smiling and to her name being called. She nicely took pleasure in the social aspects of the evaluation. Although she responded to the clinician's use of a gaze shift to redirect her attention, GIRL did not seek to draw other's attention to objects in the distance (e.g., bubbles, moving toy bunny, etc.). She did not tend to show toys or share toys as frequently as other children her age.

GIRL demonstrated some nice strengths in her functional play. She used objects appropriately, showing strong interest in cause and effect toys and in dolls and stuffed toys. She imitated the clinician's use of objects and also used a wooden block in place of an actual toy when performing imitation tasks. GIRL did not yet use figures as independent agents. For example, although she pretended to feed a doll, she did not use the doll to perform its own actions.

GIRL was not observed to engage in stereotyped or repetitive behaviors during the ADOS. She was well regulated with an appropriate activity level, showing no symptoms of anxiety. Overall, GIRL's performance on the ADOS met classification cutoffs for an autism spectrum disorder due to difficulties in communication and reduced social interaction. Although testing with the ADOS does not mandate or negate a diagnosis, it has demonstrated utility in establishing an accurate diagnosis.

Module 3 Example

Given his history of difficulties in peer relationships and unusual social presentation today, BOY was administered the ADOS to evaluate his communication and social relatedness. The ADOS is a semi-structured, standardized assessment of communication, social interaction, and play for use with individuals with possible autism spectrum disorders. The ADOS has demonstrated utility in distinguishing between those children who have autism spectrum disorders from those who may have other developmental difficulties. BOY was given Module 3, which is designed for adolescents who are verbally fluent. It consists of multiple activities with accompanying behavioral ratings.

In the communication domain, BOY generally used sentences in a correct fashion. He spoke with appropriately varying intonation. Although BOY did not echo the clinician, he showed some idiosyncratic and repetitive use of language. For example, BOY used the phrase "all things considered" multiple times within ten minutes. He nicely offered some appropriate information about his experiences, also relating some stories about a recent trip and interactions at school. He supplemented his oral language with a variety of descriptive and emphatic gestures. The quality of these gestures was exaggerated at times. BOY did not demonstrate typical social interest in other's conversational leads and he struggled with inappropriately talking over others.

In terms of BOY's social interaction, he fluidly modulated his eye gaze to facilitate social exchanges. He also directed some facial expressions toward others. BOY nicely shared enjoyment of the social aspects of interaction and made appropriate comments which referenced some understanding of other's emotions. In contrast, he showed mild difficulty with displaying insight into relationships. Although the overall quality of his social overtures and responses occasionally was awkward, rapport generally was comfortable given BOY's enthusiasm and cooperation.

BOY did not demonstrate significant repetitive behaviors or unusual sensory interests during the ADOS. However, he tended to perseverate on trains and train schedules throughout the interview. Overall, his presentation on the ADOS was consistent with that of other children who have diagnoses on the autism spectrum.