THE STUDENT WHO MAY BE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

(may identify as having ASPERGER’s)

Asperger’s is a developmental disorder that affects a person’s ability to socialize and communicate effectively with others (Mayo Clinic, 2008). Students with Asperger’s may exhibit a tendency to fixate on or be absorbed by specific topics, difficulty picking up on social cues/norms, impairments in nonverbal communication, mild abnormalities in speech/ language, and an awkwardness in social interactions.

However, there are great differences between individuals with Asperger’s and how the syndrome manifests. As the mental health and educational community become more aware of the signs/symptoms of Asperger’s syndrome, more cases are being diagnosed and treated. It is likely you will come encounter students with Asperger’s while working at MCC. Given the social nature of Asperger’s it is helpful to be aware that a student’s unusual behavior may require a supportive response.

**WHAT TO DO:**

* Educate yourself about Autism, (<https://www.nami.org/getattachment/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Fact-Sheet-Library/Autism-Fact-Sheet.pdf>) provides a good overview.
* Consult with the Disability Support Services Counselors help you determine how to be most helpful to the student.
* Monitor your expectations of social norms. Students with Asperger’s might not respond in the ways that you are accustomed.
* Remain patient. Those with Asperger’s have a tendency to fixate on or narrow topics, which can be frustrating to some people. You can gently redirect the student to listen if s/he becomes fixated on a topic in class and is talking a great deal.

**WHAT NOT TO DO:**

* Punish, criticize, or demean the student for not picking up on social cues or fixating on a specific topic.
* Presume that the syndrome affects the student’s level of intelligence or ability to be successful in an academic setting. There are many brilliant and successful professionals with Asperger’s Syndrome.

\*\**When in doubt, if any personal information the student tells you raises red flags, consult with* the Student Advocacy and Accountability team. <https://webapps.mccneb.edu/bcat/>