



## Communicating Research in Clear Language

### Thriving in Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Intellectual Disability

#### What is the research about?

Thriving refers to personal wellbeing and continued positive personal growth that allows an individual to participate in relationships and make contributions to others. When young people have encouragement and opportunities to develop the 6 Cs of thriving: competence, confidence, character, caring or compassion, connection with others, and contributions to family, self, and community, they are said to be thriving. This study looked at parent report of their child's thriving, comparing children and youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) alone, to those with ASD and Intellectual Disability (ID).

#### What did the researchers do?

The researchers recruited 330 family caregivers of participants in the Special Olympics, aged 11 to 22 years of age (about 60% males). All of the children and youth had been diagnosed as having an intellectual disability, and about 30% of them also had ASD. The parents were asked to report on their child's ability to carry out daily life activities, communicate and engage with others, and their ability to perform activities like reading, making change, looking up telephone numbers and using a telephone. The parents also reported on how involved the young person was at home, school, and in the community. Using a 5 point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree), the parents rated their child on each of the six characteristics of thriving.

#### What did the researchers find?

The young people with both ID and ASD or those with ID alone did not differ in their ability to carry out activities of daily living or to solve problems and do thinking tasks. However, those with both ID and ASD had much lower ability to communicate and engage with others compared to those with ID alone. They also participated less at school. These two factors combined affected the ability of this group's members to thrive as individuals.

#### Take home message

In this study young people with both ASD and ID were found to be hampered in their ability to grow as persons because of their poor social communication and engagement skills and their low participation in school. Research is needed to discover ways to help young people with similar problems to overcome them, so that they can be set on a path to thrive.