

FAQ - Autism: Life after Early Intervention

This paper sought to explore the options available to children between the ages of 9 and 13 who suffer from autism. It did so by exploring two main points:

1. The needs of children aged 9-13 who suffer from autism
2. The options of early intervention available to such children

It concluded by presenting some recommendations for the improvement of the options and the increase in the accessibility to them..

What are the early options for children with autism?

- The first phase of education and training for autistic children comes in the form of early intervention programmes. Such programmes have been proven to assist in the mental and physical development of autistic children.
- These programmes must be followed by further educational development for children who cease to receive regular care following early intervention risk erasing all the gains they have made.

Where can autistic children between the ages of 9-13 go to obtain an education?

- Government/Mainstream Schools
 - Inclusive Education Program, IEP.
 - Integrates children with special needs into mainstream classes, up to 5 per class.
 - Special Education Integration Program, SEIP.
 - Separate special needs classes within mainstream schools, catering to those who have more severe disabilities, the more severe end of the spectrum.
- Private learning centers and facilities
 - Private schools with special needs learning programs.
 - Often charge relatively high fees, The Learning Connection (a high end center) in Solaris Mont Kiara charges RM11000 per term for a three term year.
 - Other centres, such as Oasis Place offer therapy and short learning sessions, they charge RM180 per hour.
- Centres by not-for-profit organisations
 - NASOM, the National Autism Society of Malaysia offers lifelong support and services to people with autism. They also offer transitioning programmes to prepare autistic children for mainstream schooling.

A SUMMARY OF OPTIONS OPEN TO STUDENTS WITH AUTISM AFTER AGE NINE

Type of programme	Details	Challenges	Cost
Government schools	<p>Two main options available:</p> <p>1) Inclusive Education Programme (IEP) - children with learning disabilities may join the regular academic stream under the, if they are able to cope.</p> <p>2) Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP) - They may also join which comprises separate classes for special needs students within the same school premises. The focus is on living skills.</p>	<p>There are a limited number of schools that provide these programmes. For example 1,345 primary schools which offer the SEIP programmes.</p> <p>Children of different levels of ability and types of disabilities are placed into one class, posing a challenge to effective teaching</p>	Free
Private learning centres	<p>The facilities offered depends on the centre. Some offer full-fledged learning facilities comparable to a school where students learn academic and living skills taught by specialised teachers and therapists.</p> <p>Other centres offer shorter classes and therapy sessions in one-hour blocks to supplement learning in schools or learning centres.</p>	<p>There are limited number of such centres, and the cost can be extremely high.</p>	<p>Around RM180 an hour for the short therapy programmes, or learning classes.</p> <p>For full-fledged schools, the fees can exceed RM33,000 a year per student.</p>

Not-for-profit centres run by charitable foundations or religious groups	<p>1. NASOM offers a comprehensive range of services from early intervention to pre-vocational and vocational training.</p> <p>2. There are also other centres that offer therapy and group programmes for children with learning disabilities, mostly short programmes of several hours duration for a few days in the week.</p>	<p>Places are limited in these programmes, and the majority only run a few hours a day.</p>	<p>Fees range from RM40 to RM80 per hour for short programmes. For longer half-day sessions, the fees are RM300 to RM800 per month depending on the frequency of the sessions.</p>
---	---	---	--

What are the pressing needs of parents with autistic children between the age of 9-13?

- Need for affordable full-day learning centres
 - Parents must have access to affordable centres for full day care of their autistic children, especially single parents and working families.
 - Despite the affordability of government schooling, it is not an option for children who are on the severe end of the autism spectrum.
 - Even affordable centres and non-for-profit organisations sometimes do not provide a solution as they often do not run full-day programmes.
 - The IDEAS Autism Centre (IAC) is a model of a centre which provides affordable full-day learning to autistic children, but the upper age limit for the centre is 9 years of age.
- Financial Assistance
 - Caring for autistic children is an expensive affair, even with affordable full-day centers.
 - Thus, there is a need for some form of financial assistance.
- Need for non-age specific programmes
 - There is a need for the creation of programmes which cater to children without age limits.
 - This is especially so for young adults and teenagers who have had no prior special education.
- Public private partnership
 - Greater cooperation among public and private institutions can help to raise the quality and accessibility to the services both sectors provide for children with autism.

