Overview of ASD & CARD

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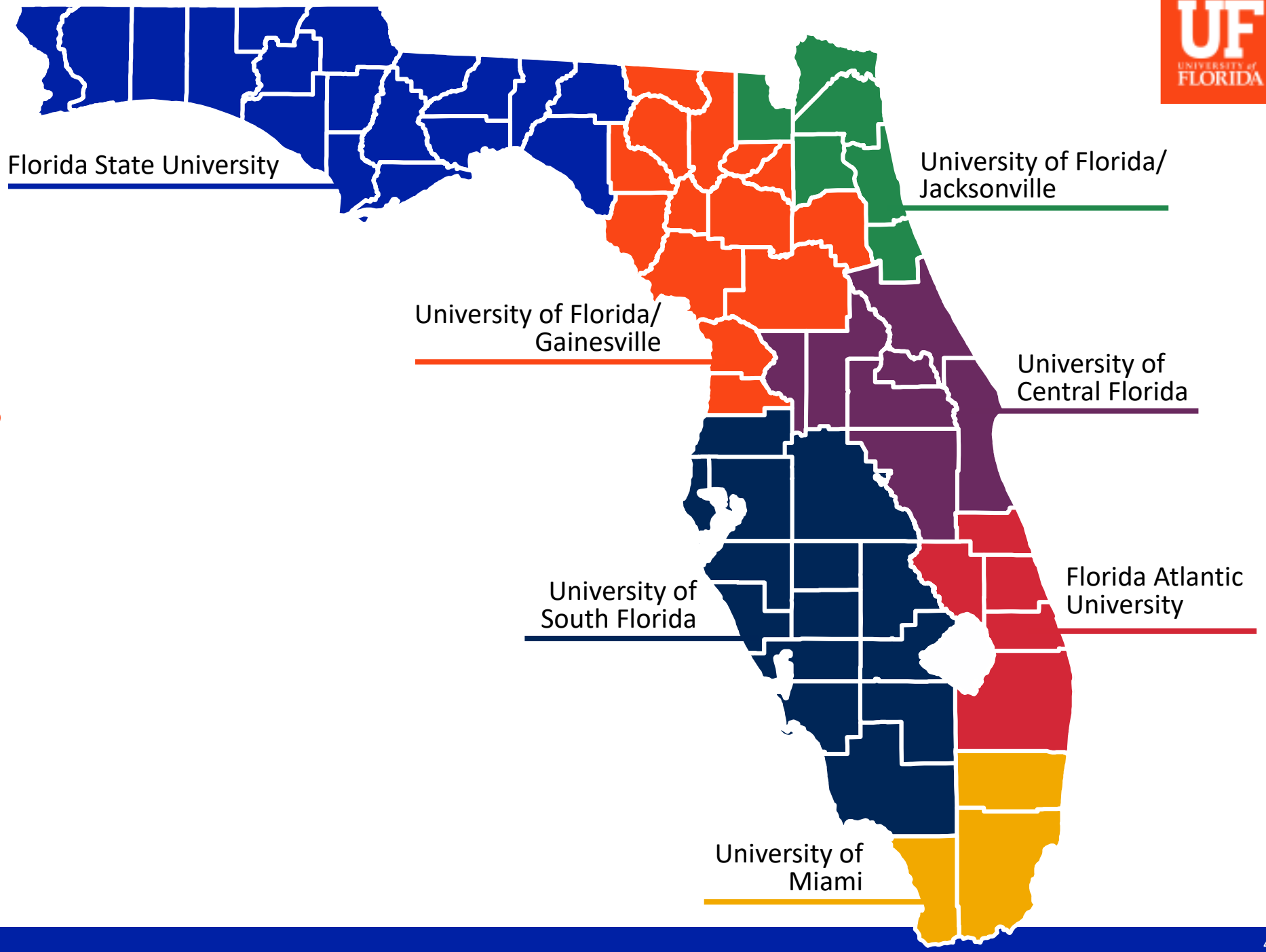
Education/Training Specialist, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA CENTER FOR AUTISM AND RELATED DISABILITIES

CARD
Center for Autism and
Related Disabilities
Florida's First Choice
for Autism Support

What is CARD?

- Center for Autism and Related Disabilities
- 7 centers statewide
- Project funded by the Florida Department of Education
- All services are free of charge

CARD
Service Regions



Who Does CARD Serve?

Qualifying individuals of any age with the following diagnoses:

- autism spectrum disorder
- developmental disability, through age 9
- dual sensory impairment (hearing and vision)
- hearing impairment and another disabling condition
- vision impairment and another disabling condition

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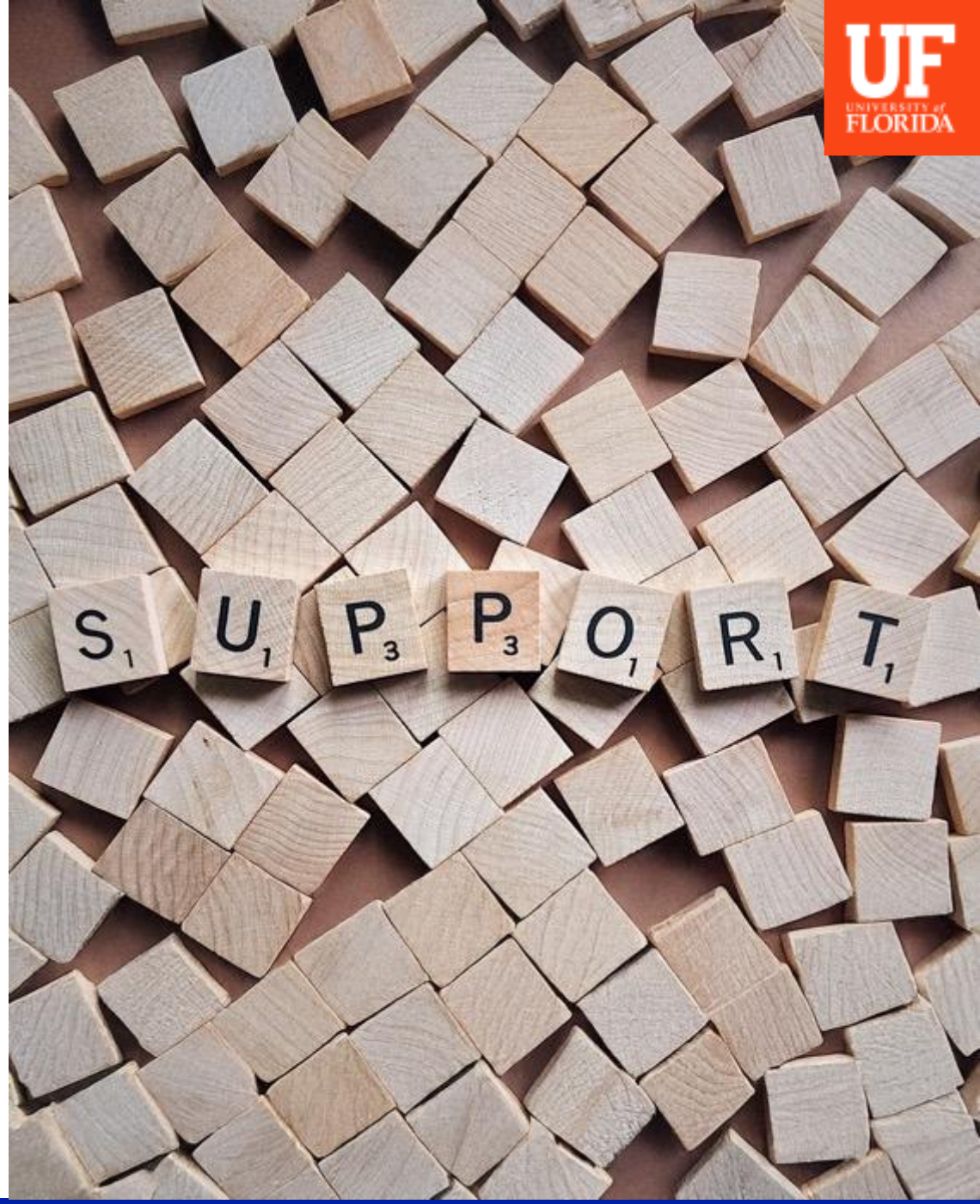
What Services Does CARD Provide?

- Training (by request)
- Consultation to schools and school districts (technical assistance)
- Consultation to families and care providers (individual assistance)
- Resource referral
- Public education
- We do NOT provide
  - Screening
  - Diagnosis
  - Therapy services



Professional Learning

- A variety of topics, ranging from information about autism, intervention strategies, and more
- In person, online synchronous, online asynchronous
- Continuing education credits often available

Technical Assistance

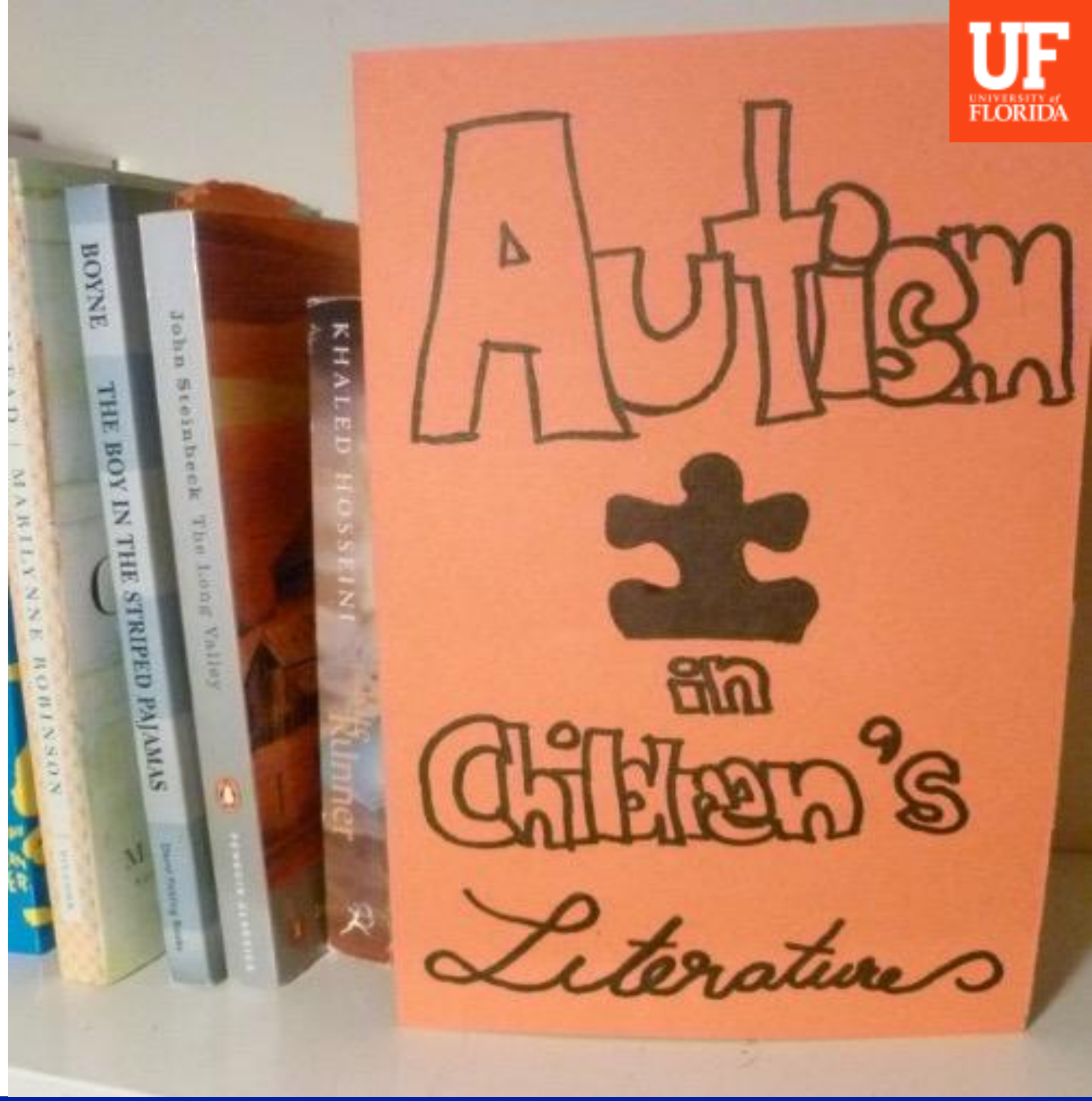
- Support to schools and school districts
- Classroom observations, recommendations, and follow-up
- Help with Individual Education Plans (IEP), 504s, and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)
- PEPSA partnerships

Individual Assistance

- Support in the home or community
- Observation, coaching, and feedback
- Address concerns such as behavior, communication, self-care and independent functioning skills, social skills, employment, and more

Resource Referral

- Up to date database of service providers and social service agencies
- Assistance with completing applications for services
- Visual supports lab



Public Education

- Bring awareness of autism and related disabilities to the community
- Participate in community events across our catchment area
- Advertise CARD services to potential families and professionals

Who Are the CARD Staff?

Professionals with experience in a variety of disciplines including:

- Behavior analysis
- Occupational therapy
- Psychology
- Special education
- Social work
- Speech-language pathology

UF Initiatives

- Support groups
- Annual Statewide conference
- Employment Boot Camp
- Autism in the Arts
- Social learning groups

Fundraising

How Can You Contact CARD?

Phone:
(352)-265-2230

Email:
card-info@ufl.edu

Ann-Marie Orlando – 352-265-2239

aorlando@ufl.edu

Address:
4101 NW 89th Blvd.
Gainesville, FL 32606

Website:
http://card.ufl.edu/

What is ASD?

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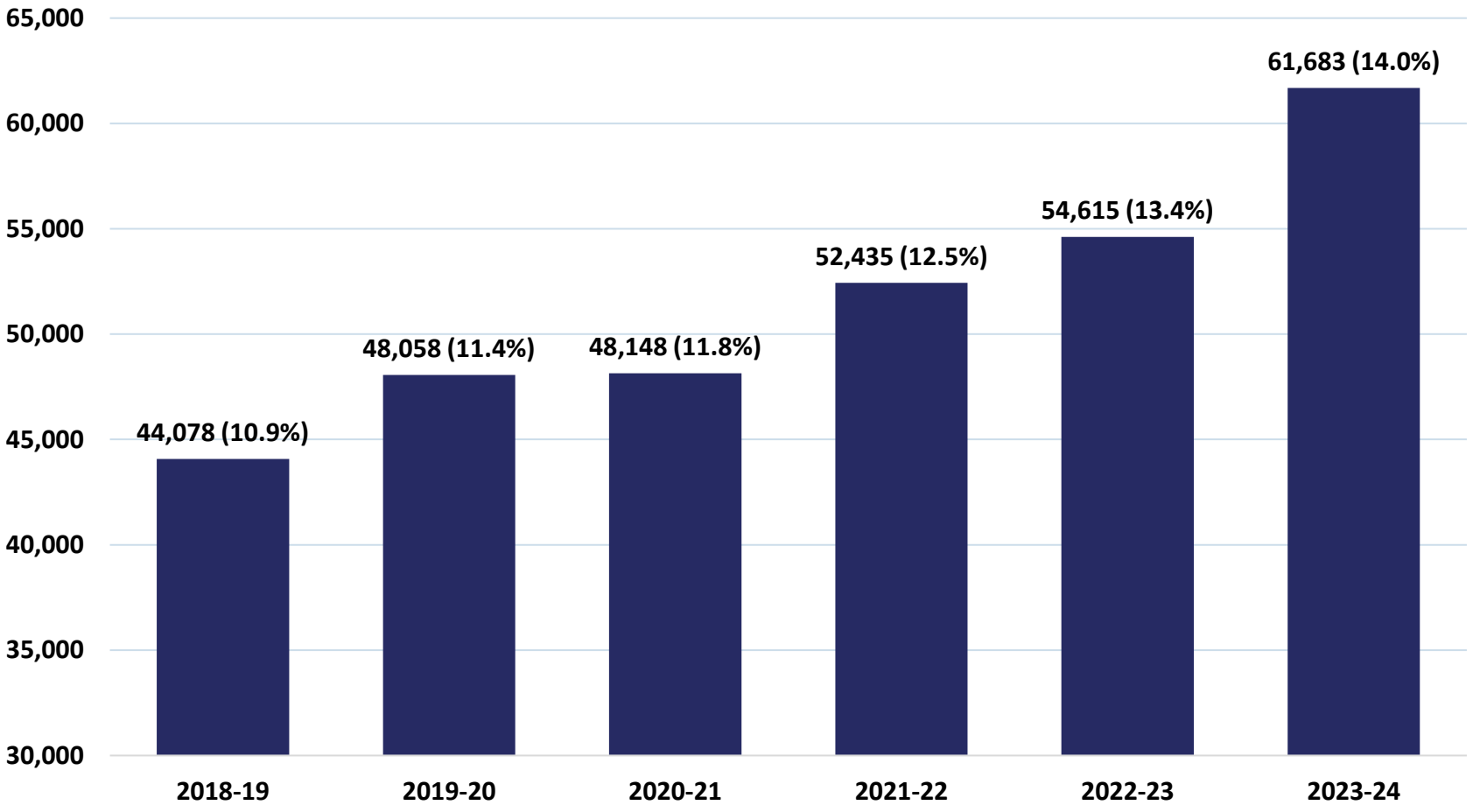
What is Autism?

- Lifelong, neurodevelopmental disability; affects patterns of development, not the ability to learn
- Affects a person's ability to communicate, understand language, play, and socially interact with others; is primarily a social communication disorder

Students Identified with ASD in Florida



Source: Final Survey 2, 2023-24
www.fldoe.org

Why the Increase in ASD Diagnosis?

- Increased awareness
- Broader diagnostic criteria
- Early intervention findings may prompt referral for to pediatricians for evaluation of ASD
- Better ASD awareness training
- More informed parents
- Diagnosis can lead to more services

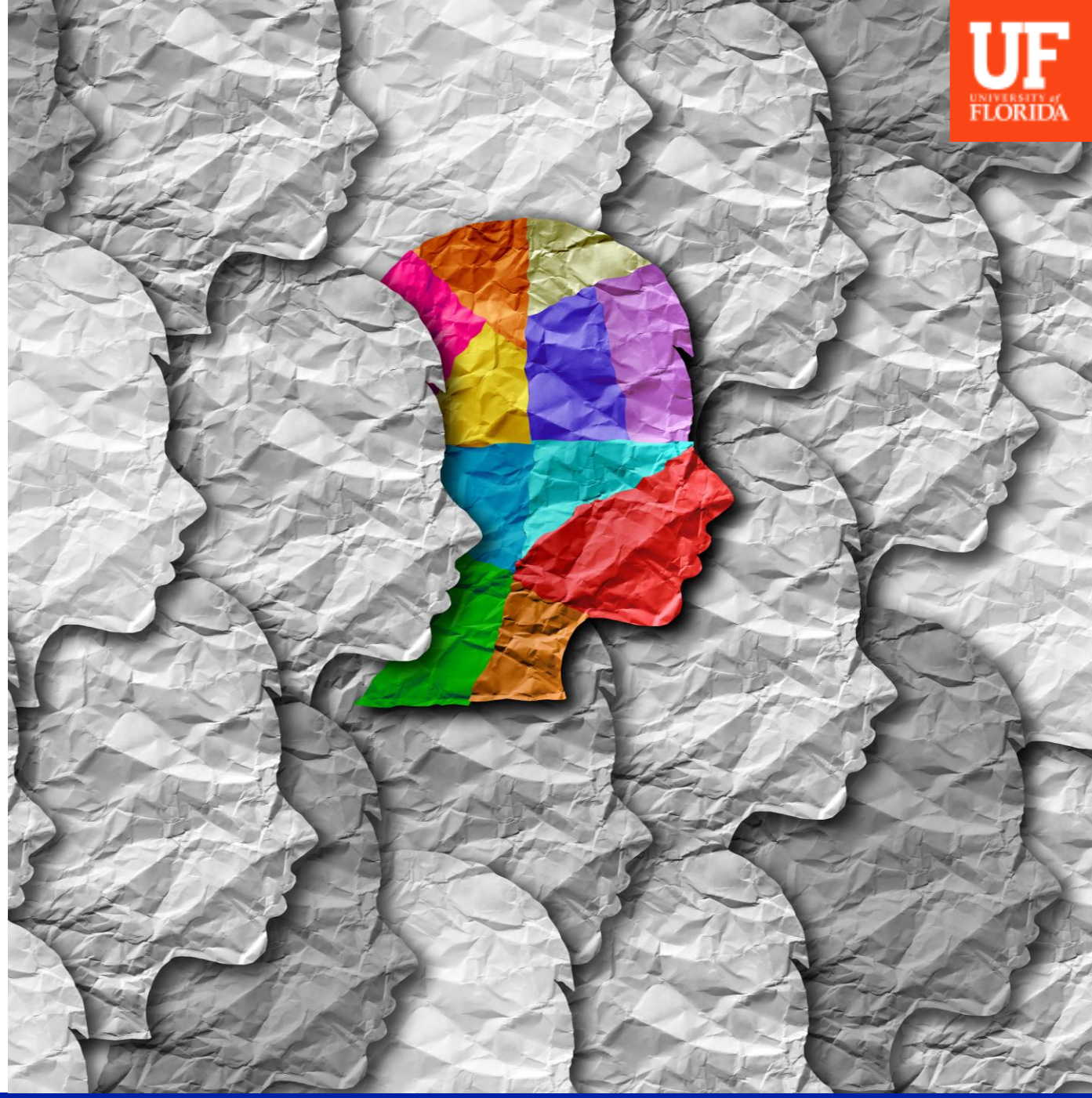
Factors that Can Contribute to ASD

Genetic

- ASD-related genes
- Neurodevelopmental disorders

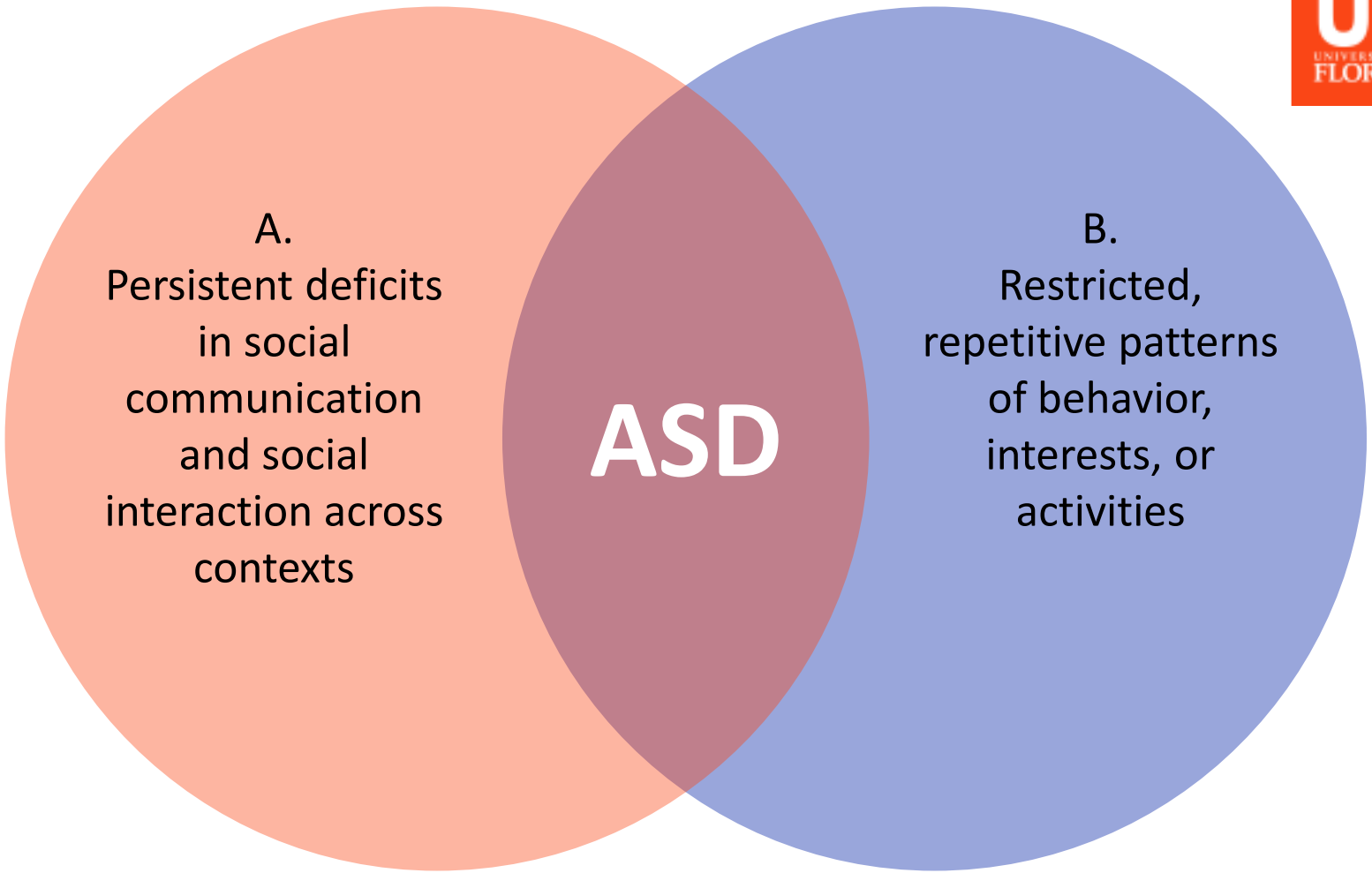
Environmental

Other risk factors



Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis: DSM-5

(APA, 2013)



C. Symptoms must be present in early childhood (but may not become fully manifest until social demands exceed limited capacities)
D. Symptoms together limit and impair everyday functioning

A. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across contexts
Must have all three of the following:

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1. Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity

2. Deficits in verbal and non-verbal communication used for social interaction

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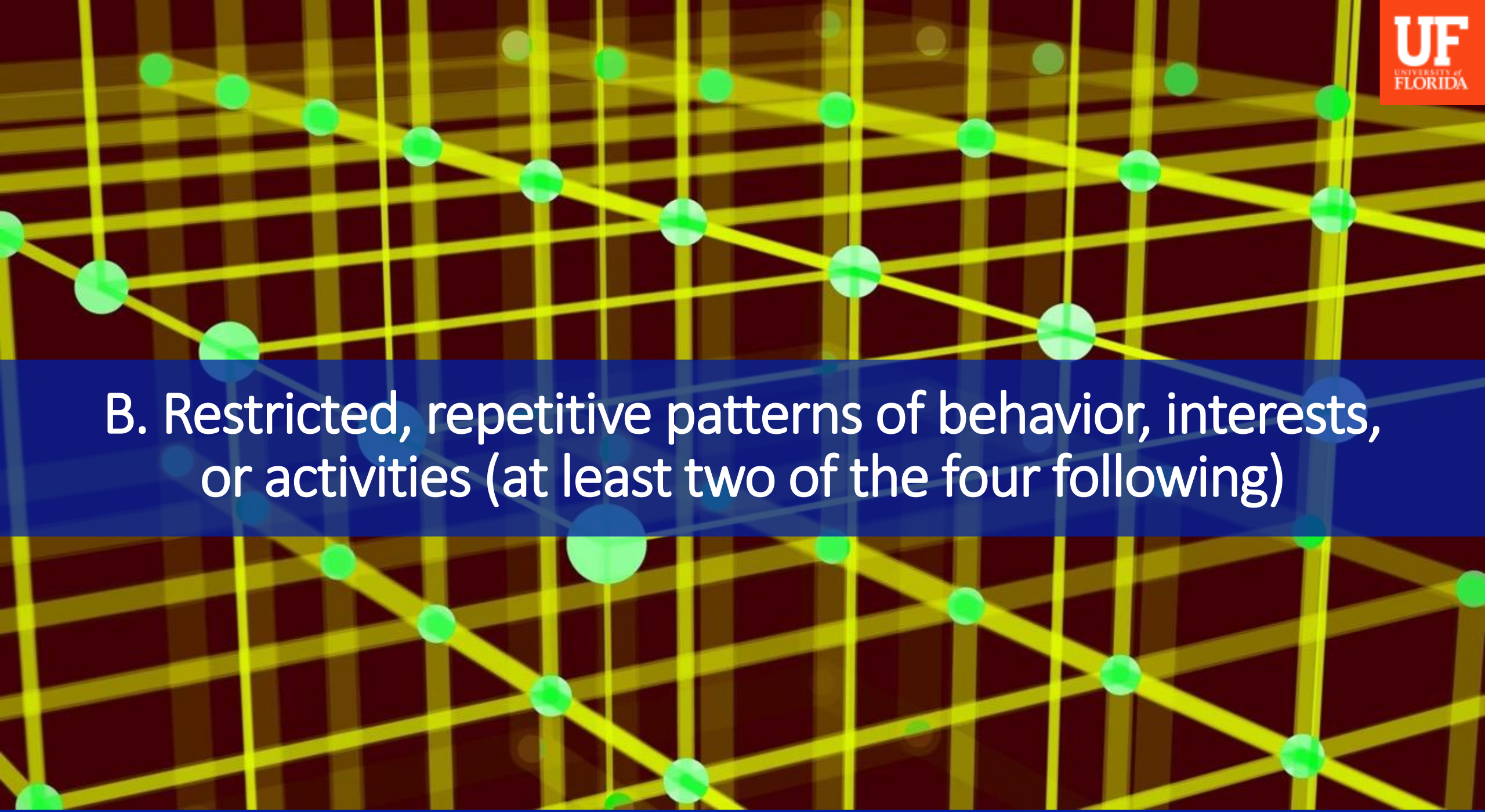
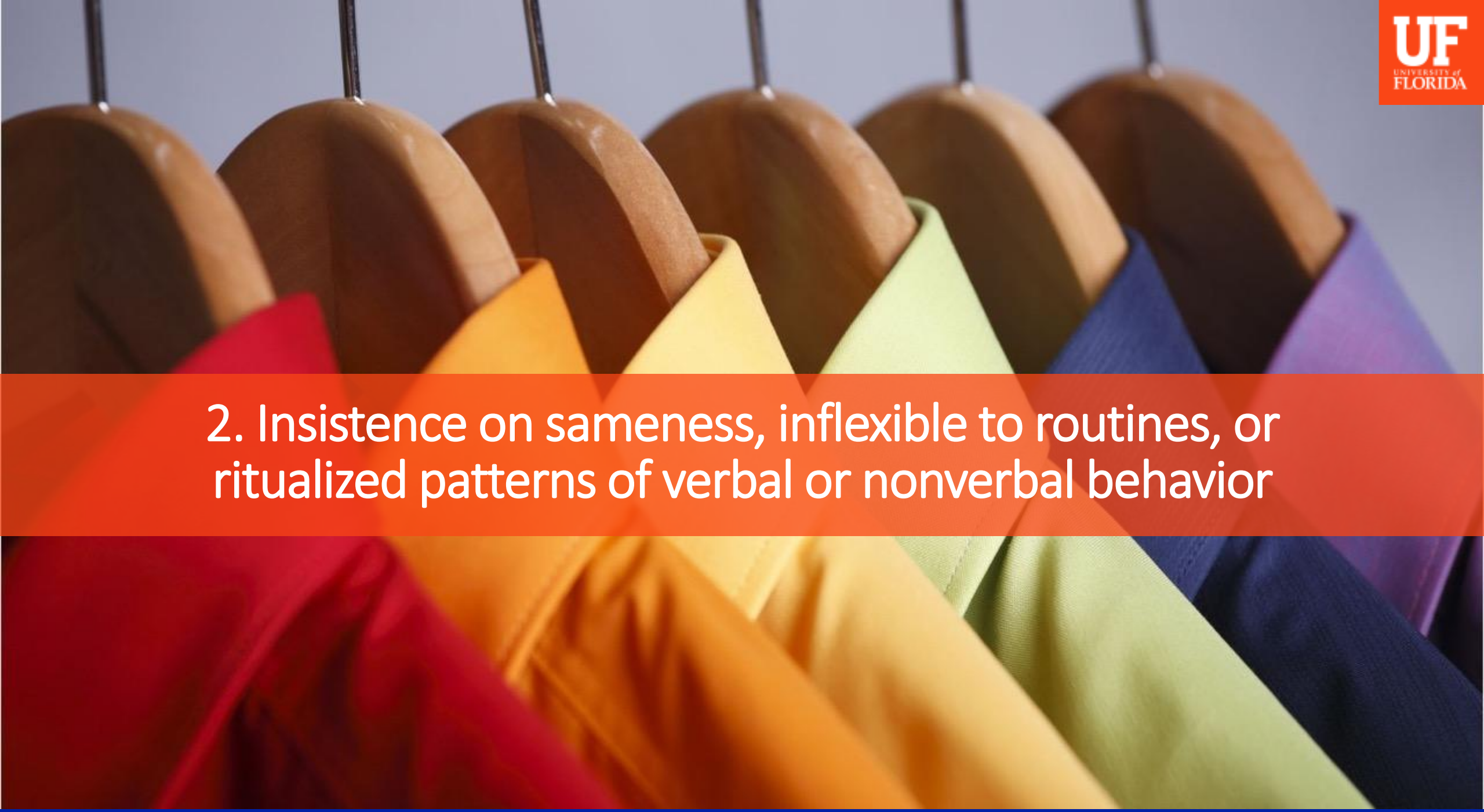
3. Deficits in developing/maintaining relationships with peers and adults



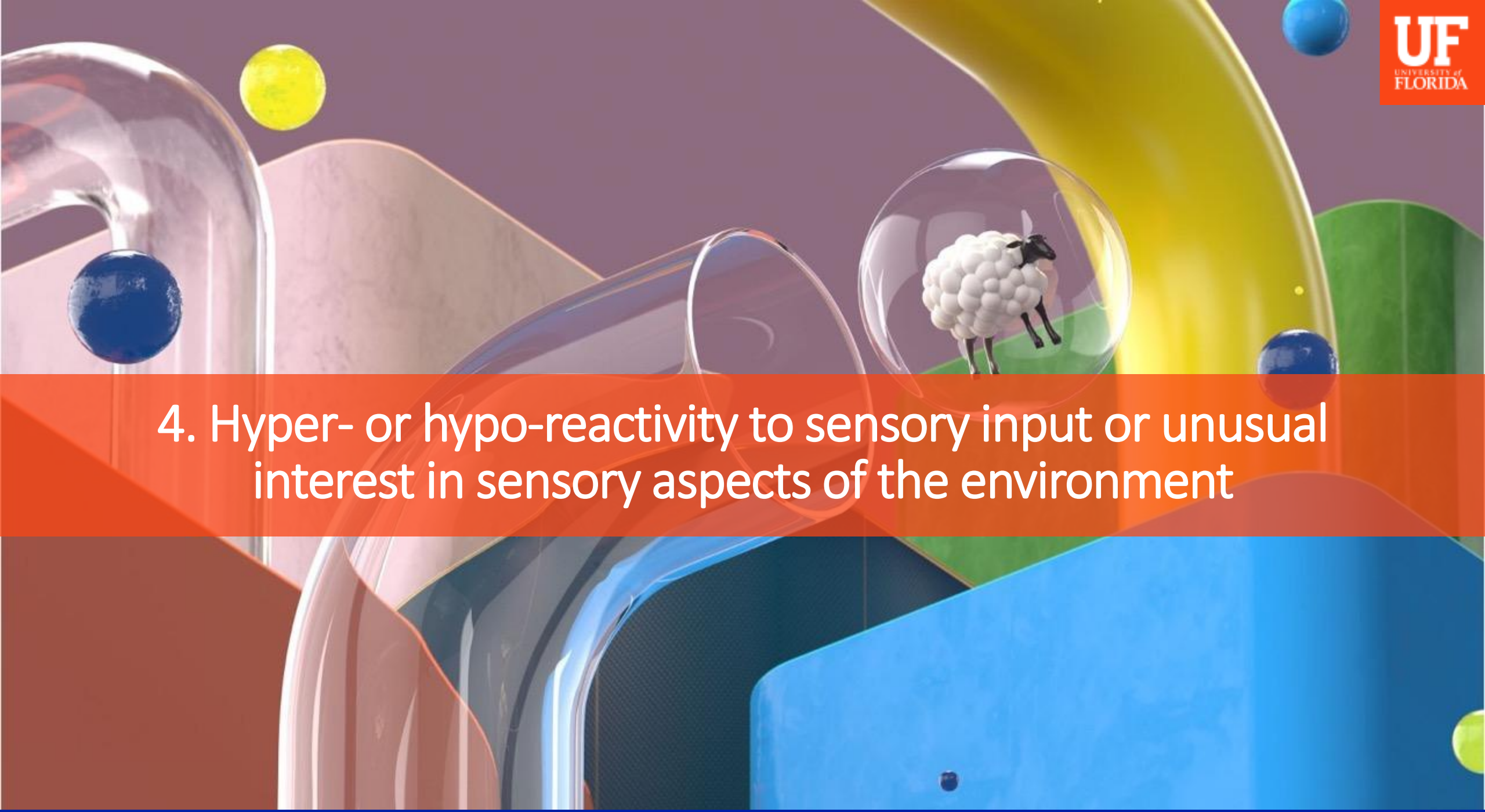
B. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities (at least two of the four following)

1. Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech



2. Insistence on sameness, inflexible to routines, or ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior

3. Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus



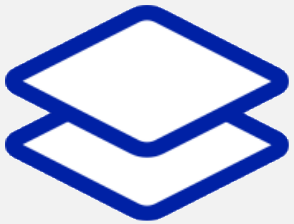
4. Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment

Severity Levels

(APA, 2013)

LEVEL 1

Requires support



LEVEL 2

Requires substantial support

LEVEL 3

Requires very substantial support

Qualifiers

(APA, 2013)

With or without accompanying **intellectual** impairment

With or without accompanying **language** impairment

Associated with a known medical or genetic condition or environmental factor

Associated with another neurodevelopmental, mental, or behavioral disorder

With catatonia

ASD Evaluation

Screening

- Completed by pediatrician at 18- and 24-month check-ups
- Early Steps
- FDLRS Child Find
- Easterseals

Diagnosis

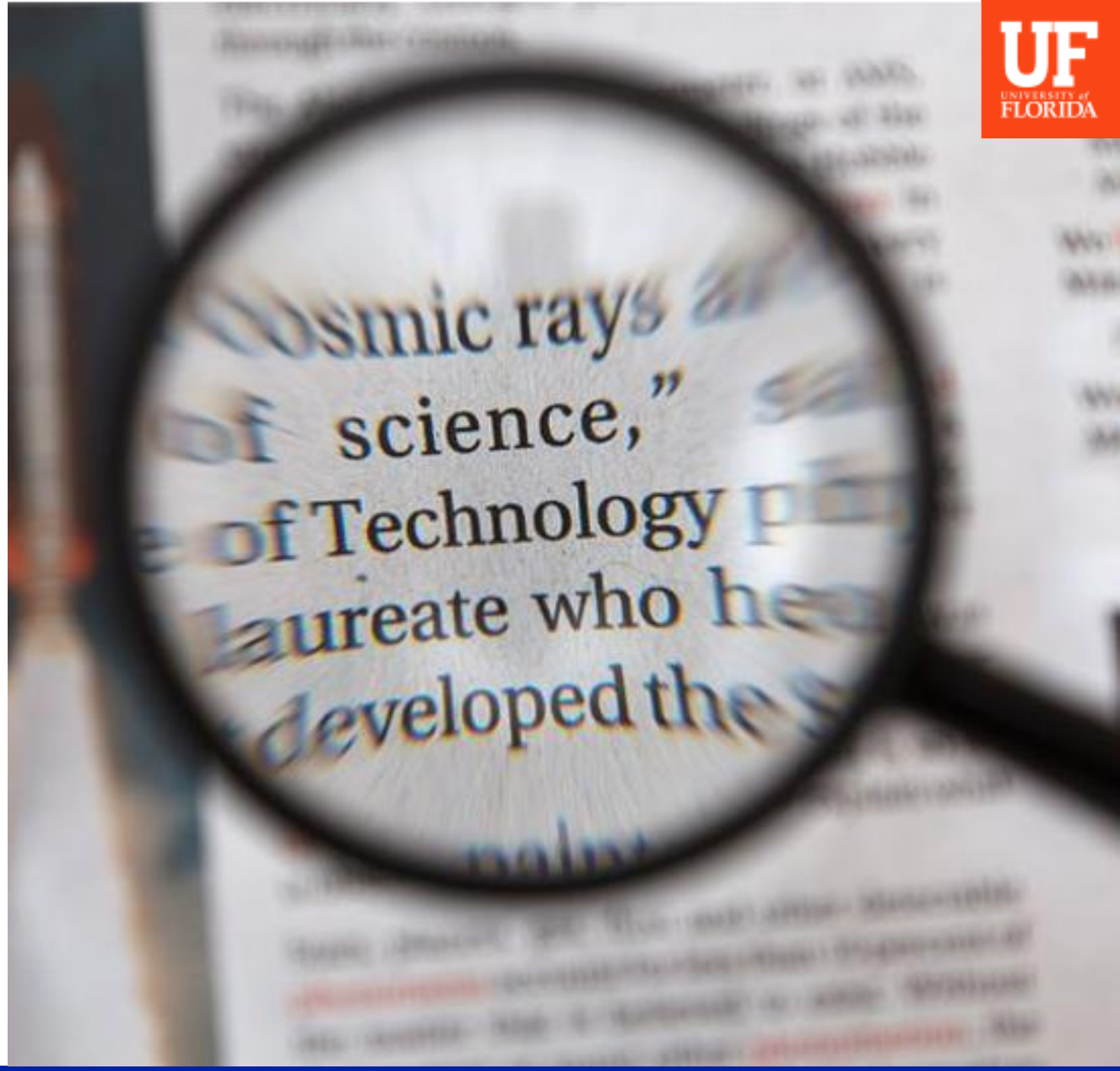
- Physician
  - Pediatrician
  - Psychiatrist
  - Neurologist (less common)
- Psychologist
  - ASD-specific measures
    - Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule
    - Childhood Autism Rating Scale
    - Adaptive behavior scales
- Multi-disciplinary Team

In General, Individuals with ASD May Have Difficulty With:

- Reading body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, sarcasm, or figures of speech
- Changes in routine or expectation (insistence on sameness)
- Organization and time management (multitasking may be difficult)
- Sensations such as loud noise, lighting, crowds, and scents
- Expressing themselves, having conversations
- Repetitive or stereotypic behaviors that interfere with engagement
- Eye contact

Some of Many Strengths

- Attention to detail
- Excellent memory
- Passion and expertise for a particular area
- Deep focus
- Visual/spatial skills
- Methodical approach to tasks
- Creative
- Integrity



Evaluation

An Overview of ASD and CARD

Tracy Cox

November 7, 2025

https://forms.office.com/r/PGLtjuVD78

We appreciate your feedback!

UF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA