

ASD Screening with the CBCL/1½-5: Findings for Young Children at High Risk for Autism Spectrum Disorder

Leslie A Rescorla, Breanna M Winder-Patel, Sarah J Paterson³,

Juhi Pandey, Jason J Wolff, Robert T Schultz and Joseph Piven

The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL/1½ -5) is a questionnaire, completed by parents, that identifies problem behaviors in young children (between the ages of 1½ -5 years). In this research, we tested the ability of particular aspects of this questionnaire – the Withdrawn and DSM-Pervasive Developmental Problems (PDP) scales – to screen for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in young children. The research involved 56 children at ‘high risk’ for ASD due to having an older sibling affected by ASD (HR group), as well as 26 ‘low-risk’ children with a typically developing older sibling (LR group). At 24 months, 13 of the 56 HR children were diagnosed with ASD (referred to as the ‘HR-ASD’ group), whereas the other 43 were not (referred to as the ‘HR-NEG’ group). The HR-ASD group had much higher scores on the CBCL DSM-PDP and Withdrawn scales than children in the LR and HR-NEG groups. The results are encouraging, because the CBCL/1½ -5 can be completed and scored quickly (including online), it does not require a professional to administer it, and it has a parallel form that can be completed by teachers or caregivers (also online). Therefore, it may be readily incorporated into a 24-month pediatric check-up. Also, because the CBCL/1½ -5 provides information about a child’s behavior in lots of different areas, a professional can quickly determine not only risk for ASD but also risk for other conditions, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, anxiety disorders, and sleep problems.