



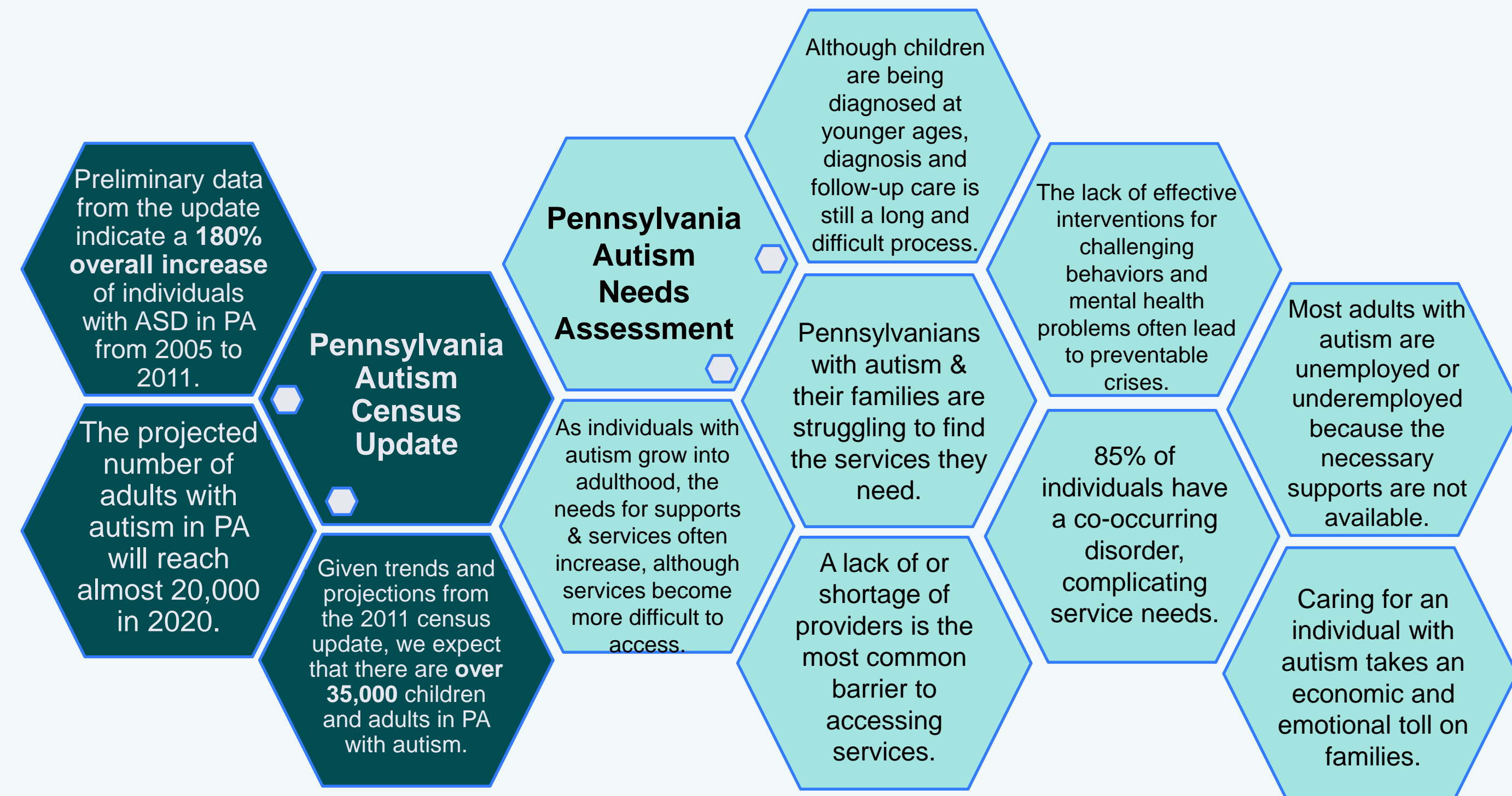
# Pennsylvania's Statewide Autism Resource Center: Leveraging State, Academic Centers, and Private Sector Expertise

Carla Craig <sup>1</sup>, Amanda Pearl <sup>1</sup>, Joelle Scholl <sup>2</sup>, Lindsay Lawer Shea <sup>3</sup>, James Connell <sup>3</sup>, John McGonigle <sup>4</sup>, Ryan Cramer <sup>4</sup>, Nina Wall <sup>5</sup>, Stacy Nonnemacher <sup>5</sup>, Erica Wexler <sup>5</sup>, Carol Lynch <sup>5</sup>, Michael Murray <sup>1</sup>

1. Penn State Hershey 2. Philhaven Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities 3. A.J. Drexel Autism Institute at Drexel University, 4. Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic of UPMC 5. Bureau of Autism Services, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare

## Meeting a Need

The PA Autism Census Project and Needs Assessment were completed by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW), in collaboration with the Autism Services, Education, Resources and Training Collaborative (ASERT). These projects indicate a rising prevalence of individuals with autism in the Commonwealth and an increasing rate of need for services. To meet the challenges faced by this growing population, DPW established ASERT as a partnership of experts from academic institutions, government and the private sector.



## The Process

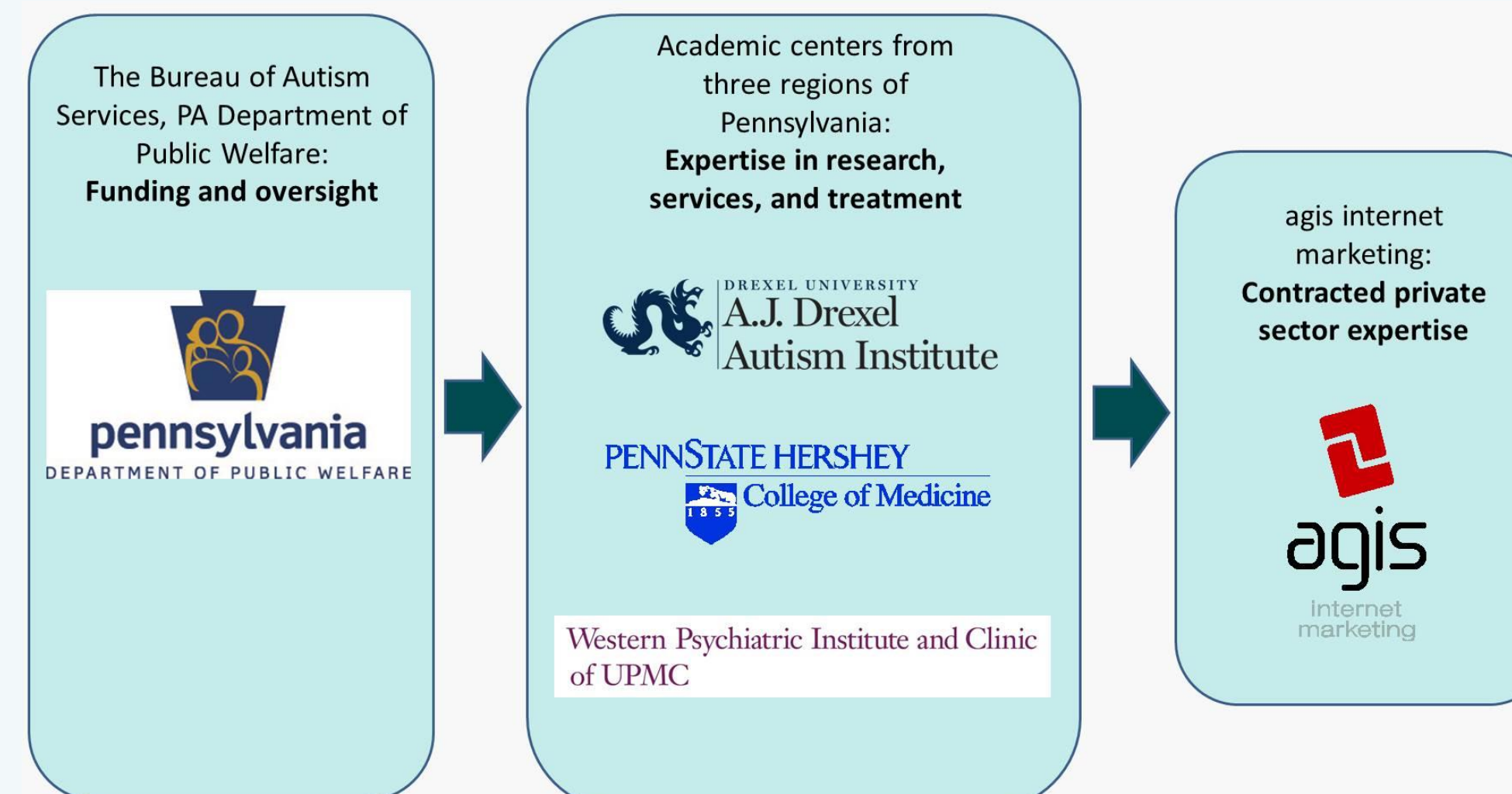
- Conducted a **Statewide Autism Census** and follow-up **Needs Assessment** to identify how many Pennsylvanians living with autism are receiving services and to reveal the scope of need for autism services and programs
- Established personal connections to individuals with autism and their families in order to gain feedback and become a viable source of trusted information
- Identified existing resources as well as where gaps exist
- Established distribution methods for ASERT resources, services, and training that could meet the needs of the autism community

## Outcomes

- Statewide toll-free resource hotline** for individuals with autism, family members, professionals and interested others
- Resource website** for 24 hour access to resources, events, training, and information: [www.PAautism.org](http://www.PAautism.org)
- Resource specialists and ASERT experts** available for in-person presentations, meetings, and resource fairs



## Website Project Structure



ASERT is funded by the Bureau of Autism Services, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare

## Lessons Learned

- Representation from three distinct regions of Pennsylvania is a crucial part of ASERT's success.
- Varied perspectives are crucial and should include:
  - Self advocates
  - Families and caregivers
  - Clinicians
  - State government and policymakers
  - Public health
- It is important to have the right mix of technical, process, content and clinical expertise in all stages of a resource center and website design, from development through implementation.

## Suggestions for Duplication

Important considerations include:

- Gain a clear understanding of the audiences you will be trying to reach and each of their needs - the ASERT Needs Assessment helped accomplish this.
- Plan from the start how to make information accessible through many channels to diverse audiences (in person, phone, web, mobile devices, etc.)
- Establish a consistent message and mission across members of the collaborative.
- Appoint a facilitator for dialogue across the members of the collaboration and create clearly defined roles.

## References

- Bureau of Autism Services, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. (2012). *Pennsylvania Autism Needs Assessment: A Survey of Individuals and Families Living with Autism: Statewide Summary*. Retrieved from [www.paautism.org/needsassessment](http://www.paautism.org/needsassessment)
- Shea, L. & Mandell, D. (2009). Pennsylvania Autism Census Project: Final Report. Study funded by the PA Department of Public Welfare, [www.autisminpa.org](http://www.autisminpa.org)

