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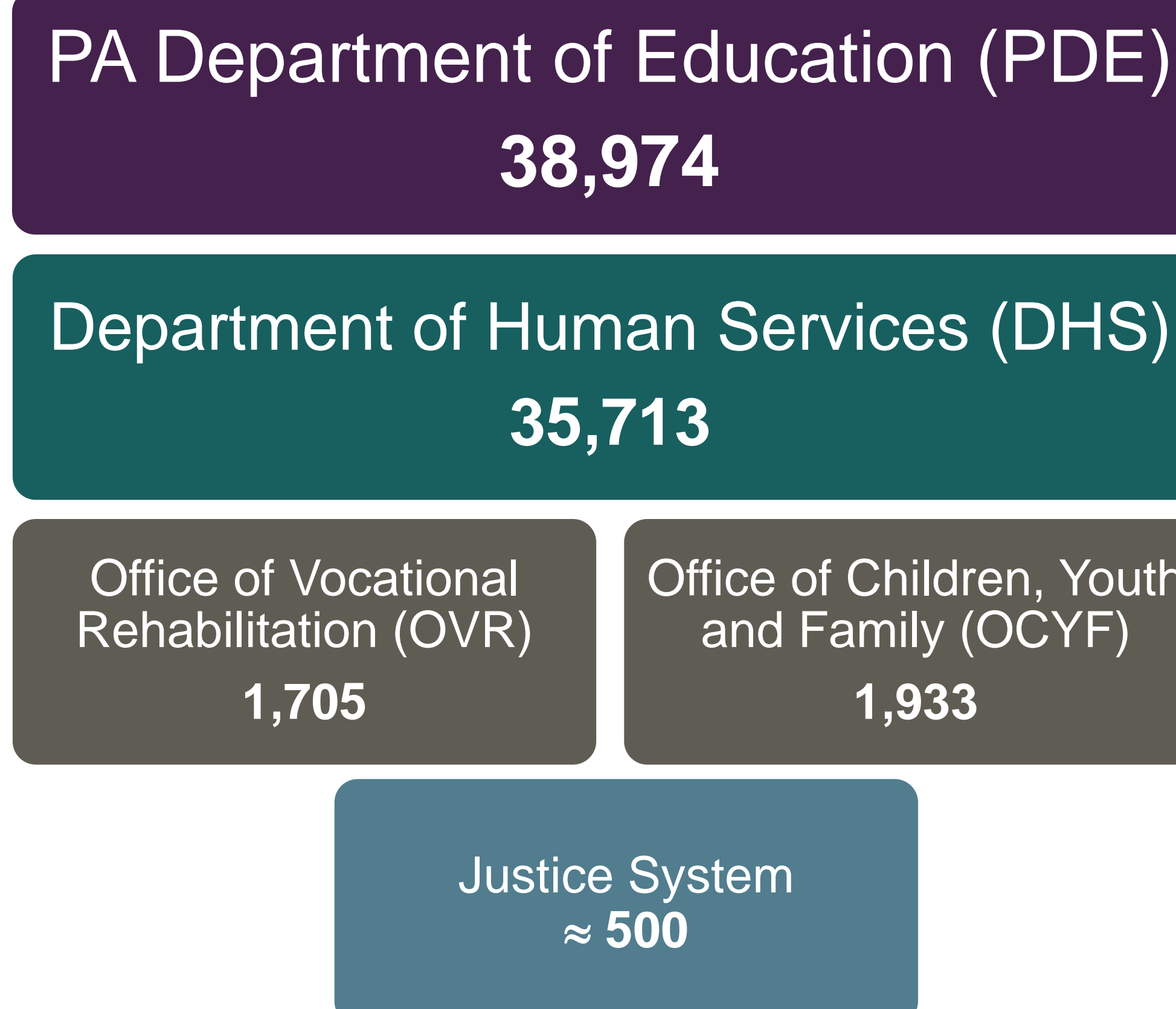
Background

- In July 2003, the Pennsylvania Autism Task Force was convened by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS).
- 250 Stakeholders met with the goal of defining a continuum of appropriate services for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families.
- One of the Autism Task Force recommendations was to create Regional Autism Centers across the state to increase the quality of, and access to, assessments, treatments, services and supports.
- The Bureau of Autism Services (BAS), PA DHS, created the Autism Services, Education, Resources and Training (ASERT) Collaborative.
- There are three ASERT regions (Figure 1), each housed at an academic institution, charged with understanding the needs of their respective region, including the needs of the most rural areas and the most underserved populations.

2014 Pennsylvania Autism Census

- In 2005, BAS commissioned an administrative census of the number of individuals with ASD receiving services in Pennsylvania with the goal of highlighting the need for ASD services and to inform policy.¹
- The PA Autism Census found almost 20,000 Pennsylvanians with ASD receiving services.¹
- In the 2011 Census Update, the number of Pennsylvanians with ASD receiving services increased to over 55,000.²
- There was a 334% increase in adults 21+, making adults the fastest growing group.²

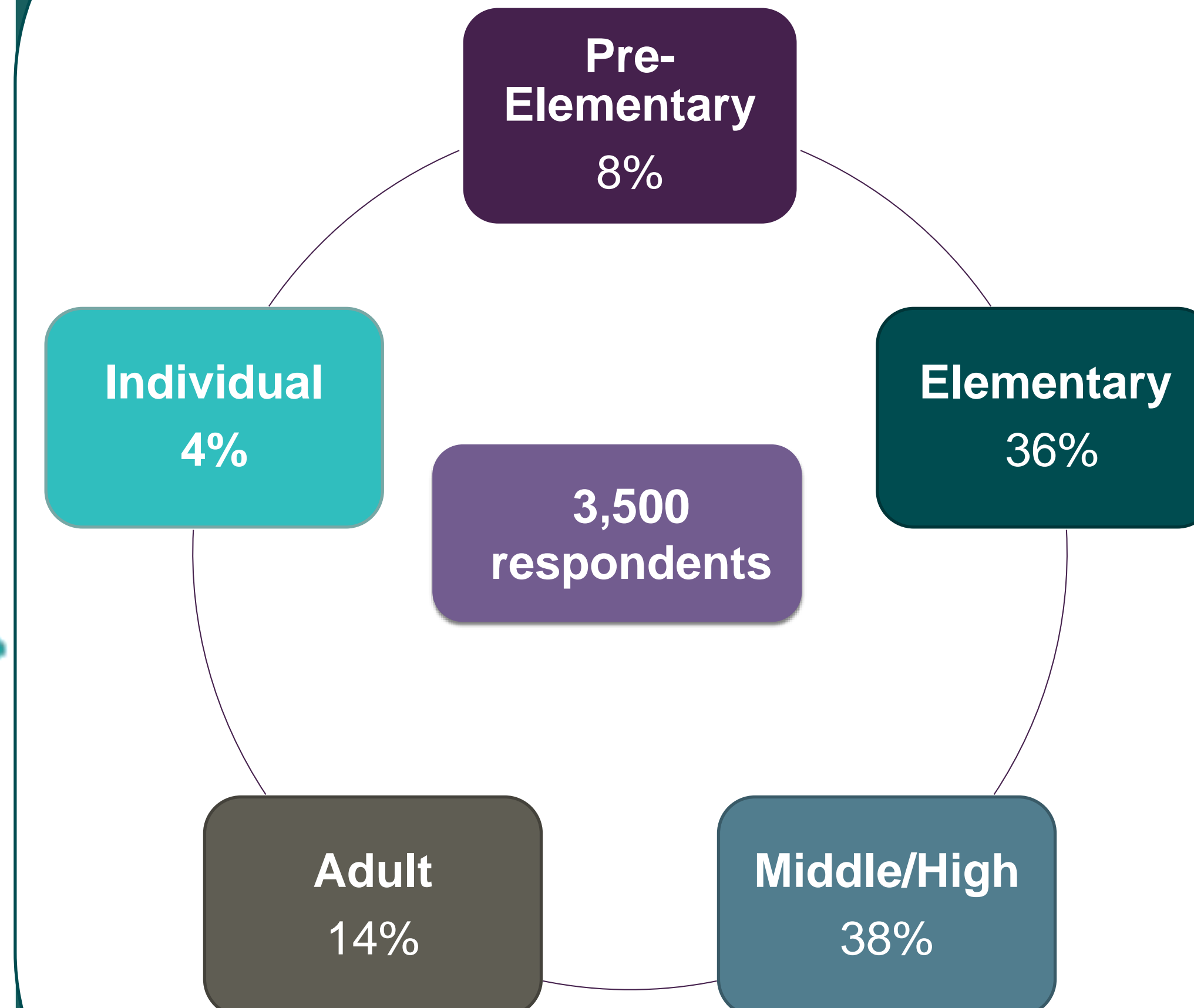
Figure 2. 2011 ASD Prevalence by Service System



Evidence of Impact

- ASERT Resource Center**
 - The ASERT Resource Center operates a toll-free call line and email account in English and Spanish. Since 2014, there have been 5,120 calls and emails to the ASERT Resource Center.
 - The ASERT Collaborative website (PAautism.org) is home to over 1,200 resources, events, and trainings. Since 2013, there have been 128,090 unique visitors to the ASERT website.
- Adolescent and Adult Diagnostic Clinics**
 - The Adolescent and Adult Diagnostic Clinics have provided ASD assessments to over 430 individuals across the commonwealth.
- Social Skills Groups**
 - 21 Adolescent and 10 Adult Social Skills Groups have been completed throughout Pennsylvania.
- Justice System Initiatives and Trainings**
 - ASERT as trained over 2,500 justice system professionals on effectively interacting with individuals with ASD.
 - Social stories on justice system interactions have been created.
- Qualitative Program Evaluation**
 - The ASERT Collaborative has conducted a series of focus groups to evaluate two BAS programs: the Adult Autism Waiver and the Adult Community Autism Program (ACAP)
 - 165 adults with ASD, family members, program administrators, and direct care staff have participated in 32 focus groups.

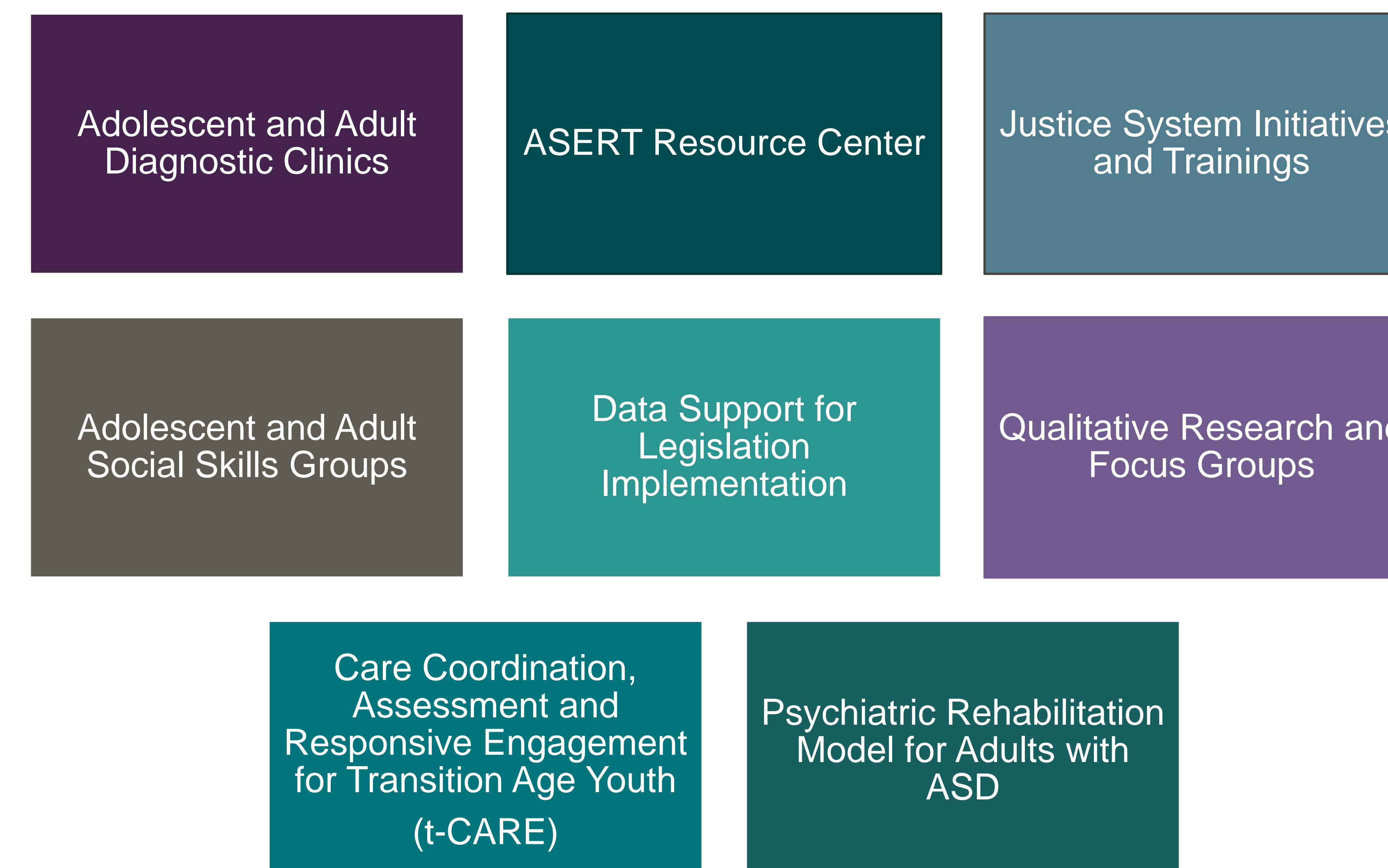
Figure 3. PA Autism Needs Assessment Respondent Characteristics



Pennsylvania Autism Needs Assessment

- In 2009, the ASERT Collaborative conducted a Needs Assessment to identify and describe the experiences of Pennsylvanians with ASD and their families.³
- With 3,500+ responses, the PA Autism Needs Assessment is the largest and most comprehensive survey of individuals with ASD and their caregivers to date (Figure 3).³
- The PA Autism Needs Assessment drives ASERT projects and serves as a roadmap for policymakers and stakeholders to guide the development and implementation of effective services and the efficient use of resources.
- A second iteration of the PA Autism Needs Assessment will be released in Winter 2017 to show up-to-date needs of the ASD population and demonstrate changes over time.

Figure 4. ASERT Projects



Conclusions & Recommendations

- The collaboration between ASERT and BAS has resulted in unique opportunities to understand and improve regional access to services, provide information and support to individuals with ASD and their families, and to train professionals in best practices.
- The location of the ASERT Collaboratives within academic institutions has allowed for innovative data, clinical, and policy projects that impact at the individual, local, and state levels. The ASERT Collaborative's innovative use of data to inform policy has helped to understand autism in a large, diverse state.
- The ASERT Collaborative model could be adopted by other states interested in improving regional access to autism services and supports and effectively translating research to policy.

Objectives

- Describe the purpose and effectiveness of the ASERT Collaborative in supporting the mission of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Autism Services (BAS).
- Provide examples of ASERT projects in data, clinical, and policy domains and their impact in Pennsylvania.
- Discuss how the ASERT model could be used in other states to support individuals with autism, their families, and state systems.

References

- ¹Shea, L. (2009). Pennsylvania Autism Census. Study funded by the Bureau of Autism Services, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. Retrieved from www.paautism.org/census.
²Shea, L. (2014). Pennsylvania Autism Census Update. Study funded by the Bureau of Autism Services, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. Retrieved from www.paautism.org/census.
³Bureau of Autism Services PDoHS. Pennsylvania Autism Needs Assessment: A Survey of Individuals and Families Living with Autism. 2011.