The need is great for diagnostic and specialized care programs for autism and other developmental disabilities in the North Texas region, as well as for clinical research to develop and test new treatments that will ultimately impact children throughout Texas, the nation, and the world. Autism services are traditionally found in many places – schools, hospitals, specialty centers, and pediatrician, private psychologist, and child psychiatrist offices. This has led to a misdiagnosis rate approaching 30 percent to 40 percent. The latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data indicate that less than 6 percent of diagnosed children across the country have had access to gold-standard, definitive diagnostic testing. The Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities at Children’s Medical Center and UT Southwestern – under the direction of the nation’s most respected experts – addresses this need with its diverse and integrated clinical services and its cutting-edge research programs – all in one location.

Please join TODAY
Private philanthropy is the critical component that will ensure the success of the program for the benefit of every child.

Your friendship can change the LIFE of a CHILD.
his complex neurodevelopmental disability affects brain maturation in ways that impact social interaction and communication skills. It typically manifests in early childhood, and five times as many boys as girls are affected. Parents are usually the first to notice unusual behaviors around the ages of 1 to 3. This is the optimal age for diagnostic evaluation because early detection affords children behavioral treatments at the time of greatest benefit.

One in 68 CHILDREN

That’s how many children in the U.S. are diagnosed with autism. Some on the autism spectrum have exceptional abilities in visual skills, music, and academics, while others have significant disability and are unable to live independently. Researchers believe that autism is caused by a number of factors – both genetic and environmental. There is no known cure, and treatment options are limited. Research is urgently needed to develop better therapies to optimize treatment for each child.

What is AUTISM?

There are a host of rare genetic disorders that can cause autism. Evaluation by a pediatric specialist is often crucial for diagnosing these conditions, which can benefit from targeted treatments. More research is urgently needed to understand how these disorders impact brain growth and to develop better ways to treat the conditions. Because the biology of these disorders is much better understood than is the case in most individuals with autism, research into these conditions may provide important insights into mechanisms of autism more generally. In addition to autism, the Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities also focuses on two syndromes that are diagnosed with genetic tests – Fragile X syndrome and Down syndrome.

What are other types of DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES?

FRAGILE X SYNDROME (FXS) is the most common known cause of inherited intellectual disability. FXS affects both males and females, although females typically have milder symptoms. About 1 in 5,000 boys are born with this genetic disorder, which causes developmental delays, learning disabilities, and social and behavioral problems. Autism occurs often in children with FXS.

DOWN SYNDROME is the most common genetic chromosomal disorder and cause of learning disabilities in children. It occurs when abnormal cell division results in extra genetic material from chromosome 21. Children with Down syndrome typically have physical growth delays, characteristic facial features, and mild to moderate intellectual disability. Also called trisomy 21, it occurs in 1 in 1,000 births each year.

A Single Center of EXCELLENCE

diagnosing autism requires a detailed review of a child’s medical history and a standardized assessment of social interaction and behavioral flexibility. This is best performed by a team that includes neurologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and speech and language experts. An interdisciplinary team working together ensures that the best health care professional in each field participates as needed to confirm the diagnosis and develop the optimal treatment plan in a patient-centered context.

With this challenge in mind, and building on the unique resources of Children’s Medical Center and UT Southwestern Medical Center, the institutions joined together to create the new Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities. The Center provides integrated, interdisciplinary clinical services at a single site, and physician-scientists in the Center conduct leading-edge research aimed at improving the care of individuals living with developmental disabilities. Basic research leading to understanding the fundamental causes of autism and other syndromes is underway to devise new therapeutic approaches. The Center also offers behavioral interventions, especially for young children shortly after diagnosis, and a psychopharmacology clinic for older children, as well as referral resources throughout the area.