

Can pets help kids with autism?

Here in Pennsylvania, as is the case in the U.S. as a whole, there are many kids who are on the autism spectrum.

Finding out that one's child has a developmental disorder, like autism, can be a very difficult moment for a parent. However, it is very important for parents to remember that a child having a developmental disorder does not mean the child cannot have a good and happy childhood and a successful and fulfilling adulthood.

There are many different therapies and aids out there aimed at helping kids with autism deal with the struggles they can face. Now, a challenge that can arise for low income families with children with autism is getting the resources necessary to both provide their child with helpful therapies and aids and ensure their child's everyday needs are met. Supplemental Security Income benefits may be one option to help address this challenge if the child and the family fall below a certain income and asset level and the child's autism is severe.

Among the struggles that children with autism can face are difficulties when it comes to the development of social skills. A recent study indicates that something very simple could have social-skill-development benefits for child autism sufferers: having a family pet.

The study looked at 70 families in which a kid with autism was a member. The kids fell between the ages of 8 and 18.

Fifty-seven of these 70 families had some sort of pet. The families varied quite a bit in the types of pets they had. The most common were dogs and cats.

The researchers found that the kids with autism from families with pets exhibited a higher level of social skills than those from families without pets.

Why might having a family pet help a child with autism socially? The researchers postulated that having a bond with a pet may provide a helpful social catalyst for such kids.

What do you think of this study on kids with autism and pets? Do you think that having a family pet can be a valuable thing for the social development of a child on the spectrum?

Source: Disability Scoop, "[Pets May Boost Social Skills In Kids With Autism](#)," Shaun Heasley, Jan. 5, 2015