



Nevada Commission On Autism Spectrum Disorders

Addressing issues across the lifespan



February 2, 2010

The Honorable Governor Jim Gibbons
State Capitol
101 N. Carson Street
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Governor Gibbons:

As Chairperson of the Nevada Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders, I am writing to update you on the activities of the Commission during 2009. The Commission worked closely with advocacy groups during the past year to promote recommendations of the Autism Task Force Report. I am enclosing an update on the recommendations for immediate action.

We were especially pleased that legislation was passed to implement a number of the recommendations for immediate action in the Task Force Report. We are grateful for all of your support, and appreciate you signing AB 162 and SB 359 into law. AB 162 requires insurance policies to offer an option of coverage for the screening, diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders for individuals under 18 or up to 22 years old if enrolled in high school. This law alone will cause life altering changes to happen to children with autism and save Nevada millions of dollars in support services. Providing insurance coverage for autism treatment was the number one priority of the Task Force.

SB 359 requires employees and contractors of the State Health Division's Early Intervention Services (NEIS) to perform screenings for autism at the age levels and frequency recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. This bill establishes the Grant Fund for the Training and Education of Personnel who work with pupils with autism to ensure that personnel employed by school districts or charter schools receive appropriate training to serve those pupils. The bill also requires employees and contractors of the NEIS to receive appropriate training to serve families with autism. This bill has already impacted the number of children getting screened for autism in Nevada. This is so critical, because the earlier treatment starts, the better the child's outcome.

In addition, funding (\$3.2 Million over the biennium) to continue autism services for families was included in the Aging and Disability Services Division (ADSD) budget for FY 10 and 11. These funds enable families who were on the program to continue to receive treatment, but did not include funding to serve additional families. Case growth is desperately needed with a current waiting list of 158 qualified children.

Although we are very pleased with this progress, we know there is still much work to be done to assist families with autism. During the coming year we will continue to monitor the autism program at ADSD and review implementation of the AB 162 and SB 359. We will also focus on services to adults with autism, which has been neglected.

Thank you for your support of the Commission and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Sincerely,

Jan M. Crandy

Chairperson

Jan M. Crandy

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Autism Task Force Report Recommendations for Immediate Action

The Nevada Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) worked with advocacy groups during the past year to promote recommendations of the Autism Task Force Report. The Task Force Report was distributed to Governor Gibbons and legislators in August 2008.

Progress made on Task Force recommendations for immediate action:

- 1. Pass legislation to require health insurance policies and the medical assistance program to cover screening, diagnosis and treatment of autism.**
 - a. Legislation (AB 162) was passed in the 2009 legislative session. Major provisions of this legislation are:
 - Requires insurance policies to offer option of coverage for the screening, diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders for individuals under 18 or up to 22 years old if enrolled in high school, effective on policies issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2011
 - Maximum benefit of not less than \$36,000 per year for Applied Behavior Analysis treatment
 - Co-payment, deductibles and co-insurance provisions are subject to the same extent as other medical services
 - Requires licensure of Behavior Analysts and Assistant Behavior Analysts
 - Requires certification of Autism Behavior Interventionists
 - School districts, local and state governments with self insured programs must provide screening, diagnosis and treatment services on July 1, 2011.
 - b. ASD Commission has been involved in the development of regulations for licensure of the Behavior Analysts, Assistant Behavior Analysts and certification of Autism Behavior Interventionists. Progress report given by a member of the Board of Psychological Examiners at the ASD Commission meetings on October 13, 2009 and January 13, 2010.
 - c. The Commission will work to identify insurers who will be covering screening, diagnosis and treatment of autism.

- 2. Pass legislation to make \$2 Million earmark for services for children with autism (for FY 08 and 09) from 2007 Legislature permanent.**
 - a. Two bills were introduced (AB 222 and SB 171) in the 2009 legislative session. Although neither of these bills passed, funding to continue services for families (\$3.2 Million over the biennium) was included in the Aging and Disability Services Division (ADSD) budget for FY 10 and 11. These funds enable families who were on the program to continue to receive services, but did not fund services for additional families.
 - b. ASD Commission is monitoring expenditures of this funding. ADSD reported on these services at the October 13, 2009 and January 13, 2010

ASD Commission meeting. ASD is working on revising policies and procedures for this program.

- c. These funds are currently serving 109 children, but there is a waiting list of 158.

3. Pass legislation to require screening and diagnosis of ASD.

- a. Legislation (SB 359) was passed in the 2009 legislative session. The bill requires employees and contractors of the State Health Division's Early Intervention Services (NEIS) to perform screenings for autism at the age levels and frequency recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- b. ASD Commission is monitoring implementation of this requirement. NEIS reported progress at the October 13, 2009 and January 13, 2010 ASD Commission meeting.
- c. The ASD Commission has requested NEIS to provide data on the number of children screened and diagnosed by NEIS staff and contractors.

4. Pass legislation to enhance professional development specific to ASD.

- a. Legislation (SB 359) was passed in the 2009 legislative session. This bill establishes the Grant Fund for the Training and Education of Personnel who work with pupils with autism to ensure that personnel employed by school districts or charter schools receive appropriate training to serve those pupils.
- b. This bill requires employees and contractors of the State Health Division's Early Intervention Services to receive appropriate training to serve families with autism.
- c. ASD Commission is monitoring implementation of this requirement. Clark County School District, Washoe County School District and NEIS reported progress at the October 13, 2009 Commission meeting.
- d. The ASD Commission will be requesting progress reports from school districts in the other 15 counties.

5. Pass legislation to ensure existing service systems address the needs of adults with ASD.

- a. **DETR's Vocational Rehabilitation Division will be requested to present information to the ASD Commission at the next meeting.**
- b. **The Commission will establish a sub-committee to examine this issue.**

6. Pass legislation to ensure para-professionals working with students with ASD meet competencies and receive pay based on a tier system.

7. Pass legislation to require any state agency or public school to adopt the Autism Task Force Best Practices when serving individuals with ASD.

8. Pass legislation to establish a system for collecting and compiling longitudinal data on individuals with ASD across early intervention services,

elementary and secondary schools, vocational rehabilitation and developmental services.

- 9. Pass legislation to fund three pilot projects to lower the public school caseload size based upon the number of students with ASD and the severity of their disabilities.**
- 10. The state will develop a 10 year Strategic Plan to address Nevada's ASD workforce needs.**
 - a. The Commission will establish a sub-committee to start work on this issue.**
- 11. Pass legislation to continue the Autism Task Force until June 30, 2013, for oversight and future strategic planning.**
 - a. The Nevada Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders was established by Executive Order in November 2008. Legislation was introduced in 2009 (AB 222 and SB 171) that included continuing the Task Force, but did not pass either house, because it would duplicate the efforts of the Commission.