



Nevada Commission On Autism Spectrum Disorders

Addressing issues across the lifespan

Commissioners

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December 11, 2014

The Honorable Governor Brian Sandoval
State Capitol
101 N. Carson Street
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Governor Sandoval:

Thank you for your support to ensure all Medicaid eligible children with an autism spectrum disorder have access to life changing treatment. This is a monumental change. The Nevada Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders is honored to join you in serving the autism community. We encourage you to also address the waitlist for the Autism Treatment Assistance Program (ATAP).

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) now affect 1 in 68 children. The Nevada Department of Education indicates there are more than 6,200 students with ASD. Left untreated, in most cases, ASD leads to a life of dependency. It is estimated that it costs \$3.2 million to take care of an individual with autism over their lifetime. Adult care and lost productivity are the biggest sources of that amount.

The good news is the **cost of lifelong care can be reduced by 2/3** with early diagnosis and intervention. This is a possible cost savings of over \$2 million dollars per person!

The Commission was pleased to see the urgency of addressing autism was recognized and supported by the Department of Health and Human Services' budget requests. Funding ATAP to serve 1,290 children by June of 2017 will allow a significant number of children on the wait list to be treated.

We are writing to encourage you to include the agencies' budget request for ATAP and Medicaid to treat children with ASD in your budget.

The longer a child waits to start treatment the less likely it is that they will live an independent life. ATAP accepts 40 new applications a month and children wait an average of a year or more to begin treatment. It is critical that access to treatment is available to every child with ASD. Research shows optimal outcomes happen when children start treatment prior to 46 months. By making a child wait for treatment, we are defining a future where life-long supports will be necessary. This course will also lead to astronomical costs in adult care.

We understand there are limited resources, but we also believe if a priority is not made now to treat these children, the cost to take care of them as adults will impact access for all disabilities and threaten the long-term viability of all state programs.

Please provide adequate funding in the budget to address the ATAP waitlist and start coverage for treatments utilizing applied behavior analysis (ABA) within Medicaid in 2015.

With Hope,

Jan M. Crandy, Chair