Supporting the Colorado Autism Community During COVID-19 Through Advocacy

June 18, 2020
Welcome

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our mission

Autism Speaks is dedicated to promoting solutions, across the spectrum and throughout the life span, for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. We do this through advocacy and support; increasing understanding and acceptance of people with autism; and advancing research into causes and better interventions for autism spectrum disorder and related conditions.
Mission Objectives

Through partnerships and collaboration, we are committed to:

• Increasing global understanding & acceptance of people with autism

• Being a catalyst for life-enhancing research breakthroughs

• Increasing early childhood screening & timely interventions

• Improving the transition to adulthood

• Ensuring access to reliable information & services throughout the life span
Join our Facebook group!

https://www.facebook.com/groups/AutismSpeaksDenver

It’s a place where we will share information and resources from Autism Speaks, and where our local community can share ideas and support with one another.
The Autism Speaks Walk is the world’s largest fundraising event supporting the autism community and is our signature fundraiser.

Denver Walk  
September 12, 2020  
Infinity Park  
www.autismspeakswalk.org
COVID-19 Challenges and State Response

Kelly Headrick, Senior Director, State Government Affairs & Grassroots Advocacy

And Special Guest Josh Winkler, Colorado Lt. Governor Dianne Primavera’s Disability Funding Committee Coordinator and Policy Advisor
Challenges the Autism Community is Facing

• Abrupt discontinuation of educational services
• Closure of day programming
• Closure of clinics and shift to telehealth
• Mental health challenges for individuals and caregivers
• Lack of connection to community opportunities/supports
• Severe disruption of community employment
• Discontinuation of respite relief for families
• Disruption of much-needed routines
• Loss of income for some families
• Challenging behaviors
• Access to healthcare with appropriate supports
Autism Speaks’ State Advocacy Has Been In These Areas

- Healthcare
- Home and Community Based Services
- Special Education/Early Intervention
Impact Statement

Autism Speaks is enhancing lives today and accelerating a spectrum of solutions for tomorrow.

UPDATES FROM JOSH WINKLER/LT. GOV’S OFFICE

Abrupt discontinuation of educational services:
• Discussions with CDE are happening in regards to meeting the needs of students with IEPs
• Local control complicates things, but does not supercede state or federal laws

Closure of day programming:
• HCPF OM 20-057 allows Day Programs to re-open if conditions are met

Closure of clinics and shift to telehealth:
• Expanded use of telehealth is likely to continue even as in-person options open, see SB20-212  https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb20-212
• As the state moves to slowly reopen more in-person options should be available
UPDATES FROM JOSH WINKLER/LT. GOV’S OFFICE

Mental health challenges for individuals and caregivers:
- This is an ever present concern exacerbated by the pandemic
- While it will not provide immediate solutions, the Behavioral Health Task Force has added a COVID-19 committee [https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb20-212](https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb20-212)
- Dual diagnosis issues are also an ongoing concern

Lack of connection to community opportunities/supports:
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UPDATES FROM JOSH WINKLER/LT. GOV’S OFFICE

**Severe disruption of community employment:**
- CDLE has tried to address both the right for people with disabilities to return to work if others are and the right to not return if the individual is high risk

**Discontinuation of respite relief for families:**
- The respite benefit through Medicaid was never stopped, though some providers temporarily stopped providing respite services

**Additional noteworthy items:**
- Crisis Standards of Care workgroup worked with disability orgs to minimize bias against people with disabilities
- Governor has used an ASL interpreter at press conferences and documents should now all be screen reader compliant
- Work to ensure people with disabilities can bring in an interpreter or other needed assistant when needed at hospitals and other medical facilities
Public and Private Insurance

On April 1st, Governor Polis issued an executive order on telehealth that included direction to the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies’ (DORA) Division of Insurance (DOI) to promulgate and issue emergency rules requiring health insurance carriers regulated by the State to permit providers to deliver clinically appropriate, medically necessary covered services using telehealth services.

• Under the COVID-19 emergency, providers can use audio-only communication as well as non-public facing remote communication products to communicate with patients, such as: Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger video chat, Google Hangouts video, and Skype.

• Audio only communication is now considered a telehealth visit and is reimbursable under Medicare, CO Medicaid and commercial health plans regulated by the Colorado Division of Insurance. Providers can bill for telehealth visits at the same rate as in-person visits.

For Colorado COVID-19 period telehealth information:
https://covid19.colorado.gov/telehealth-for-providers
Colorado was approved for a **1135 emergency waiver** in March by CMS, the federal Medicaid agency. This allows for greater flexibility which will:

- Temporarily suspend Medicaid fee-for-service prior authorization requirements;
- Extend pre-existing authorizations for which a beneficiary has previously received prior authorization through the end of the public health emergency;
- Suspend Pre-Admission Screening and Annual Resident Review (PASRR) Level I and Level II Assessments for 30 days;
- Modification of Provider Enrollment – temporarily accept provider screening done by other state Medicaid agencies;
- Provision of Services in Alternative Settings - provided that the State makes a reasonable assessment that the facility meets minimum standards, to ensure the health, safety and comfort of beneficiaries and staff.

Colorado was approved in March for an **Appendix K waiver** by CMS, the federal Medicaid agency. This allows for greater flexibility which will allow the state to:

- Temporarily exceed service limitations or requirements for amount, duration, and prior authorization to address health and welfare issues presented by the emergency;
- Temporarily expand setting(s) where services may be provided;
- Temporarily permit payment for services rendered by family caregivers or legally responsible individuals;
- Temporarily modify licensure or other requirements for settings where waiver services are furnished;
- Temporarily modify processes for level of care evaluations or re-evaluations;
- Temporarily allow all CMA required activities to be completed via phone or other technology-based method with HCBS members in accordance with HIPAA requirements.

DETAILED INFO: SPECIAL EDUCATION

The state of Colorado is receiving funds from the COVID-3 (CARES) stimulus package through the Education Stabilization Fund:

- **K-12**: $120.9 million
- **Governor’s Discretionary (GEER)**: $43.9 million

It is critical that students with autism receive appropriate supports and services, including but not limited to:

- Hardware, software, and other assistive/connective technology to help students for whom remote learning is possible
- Appropriate transition from early intervention to special education/provide extensions where needed
- Services not received during the time of school closures and remote learning, **including in-person services** provided as soon as is safe and feasible (i.e. this summer) to address regression
- Appropriate transition out of special education to adulthood/provide extensions where needed
The Colorado Department of Education has a page dedicated to Special Education during the COVID period, with these topics and FAQs:

- Compensatory Services
- Extended School Year (ESY)
- Fiscal
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meetings
- Preschool Special Education and Child Find COVID-19 FAQs (separate webpage)
- Prior Written Notices
- Progress Monitoring
- Provision of Special Education and Related Services during Suspension of In-Person Learning
- Special Education Evaluations
- Tele-Practice

Here’s the link to that page: https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/special_education_faqs
Dear Early Intervention Community,

Early Intervention (EI) Colorado is reaching out to you to share updated information regarding the provision of EI services in the home. In alignment with Governor Polis’ Safer at Home order, guidance provided by the Colorado Department of Health and Environment and CDC, as well as advisement from a planning group, all EI services will continue to take place virtually through at least June 30, 2020. No in-person visits for children with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) are authorized or funded as an EI service by EI Colorado.

We understand that this decision impacts families, service coordinators and providers in different ways. EI Colorado is striving to meet the needs of everyone concerned and is weighing the risks and benefits to the best of our ability, using the most current information we have. This requires careful thought and planning and the need for flexibility whenever possible.

As more information is available, we will continue to revise plans, evaluate practices and share any updates. To ensure the health and safety of the children, families, and providers engaged in EI services, please know that virtual visits may extend beyond June 30 2020.

EI Colorado has broadened the opportunity for input and advisement on this topic by creating a planning work group that meets weekly. This group includes family members, providers, service coordinators, and administrators to examine what EI Colorado needs to consider in order to safely return to in-person services. As part of this work, we will be providing you an opportunity to share your feedback through a survey in the very near future. Information from this survey will be used to inform our plan for returning to in-person visits.

If you need help with receiving or providing successful virtual visits please contact EI Colorado at www.eicolorado.org
Federal COVID Legislation – What’s Passed

MARCH 6: COVID 1
Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations
Provides $8.3 billion in emergency funding for federal agencies to respond to the coronavirus outbreak

MARCH 18: COVID 2
Families First Coronavirus Response Act
• Provides emergency paid sick and family leave
  • DOL has provided Q&A regarding these provisions of the law
• Tax credits
• Free COVID-19 testing (where available)
• Expands food assistance and unemployment benefits
• Increases Medicaid funding

MARCH 27: COVID 3
Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act
Provides $2 trillion in funding for provisions, including:
• Economic impact payments to most Americans
• Increased unemployment benefits
• Hundreds of billions of dollars to address the public health response
• Assistance for small businesses and other employers to retain employees and keep their businesses operating
• Billions of dollars for schools
• Extends the Money Follows the Person program through November
Federal COVID Legislation – What’s Passed

APRIL 24: COVID 3.5
Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act

Interim bill to replenish small business assistance program and address other issues:

• Limited scope to address Paycheck Protection Program and funding for hospitals and testing.
Our advocacy priorities during the COVID crisis

- Additional funding for home and community-based services (HCBS)
- Additional funding to meet the educational needs of students with autism
- Protecting the rights of students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other laws
- Expanded access to telehealth services for health care needs
- Eligibility for $500 economic impact payments for dependents over age 17
- According caregivers of adults with disabilities the same emergency paid sick and family medical leave policies accorded caregivers of children
- Preventing discrimination in treatment decisions and care allocation based on disability

Congressmen Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Mike Doyle (D-PA), co-chairs of the Congressional Autism Caucus, have sent letters to congressional leadership advocating for many of these priorities.
What’s next?

• COVID 4 – negotiations ongoing

• On May 15th, the House of Representatives passed The Heroes Act – a $3 trillion relief package.

• Priorities that are included in The Heroes Act:

  • Substantial increase in funding for HCBS
  • $100 billion for education (in addition to $1 trillion in general assistance for state and local governments)
  • Dependents over 17 retroactively eligible for economic impact payments. Eligible for additional $1,200 payments in Heroes Act.
  • Clarifies eligibility for emergency paid sick and family leave for caregivers of adults with disabilities
  • $10 million for DD Act activities

• The Senate has not indicated that it will take up this bill. Path from here is unclear...
Connect with us!

Sign up for advocacy alerts and emails and find your elected officials at www.autismspeaks.org/advocacy

Follow our advocacy profiles

| Autism Speaks Advocacy
| @AutismVotes
| @AutismVotes
Direct Support to the Autism Community

Emily Mulligan
Manager, Autism Response Team
Contact our Autism Response Team

The Autism Response Team (ART) is an information line for the autism community. Our team members are specially trained to provide personalized information and resources to people with autism and their families.

How to contact ART

Call our toll-free number or send us an email – we’re available between 9am and 5pm in all time zones. Live chat is also available between 9am and 5pm ET.

Your call will be routed to the team member for your region. We also have a dedicated Spanish language toll-free number.

1-888-AUTISM2 (1-888-288-4762)

En Español: 1-888-772-9050

help@autismspeaks.org
COVID-19 Information and Resources

We

The Autism Response Team responds emails and phone calls

Autism Cares Grants specifically to help families with financial needs

COVID-19 pages
• We have general resources, resources for families, healthcare providers, educators, and people with autism.
• Resources are updated weekly and posted on social channels as well as our website

www.autismspeaks.org/covid-19-information-and-resources
48 Autism Speaks tool kits for children, adults, families & healthcare professionals

*100 Day Kit in 17 languages
Resource GUIDE

Looking for expert advice and even more information? Try our Directory.

Advocacy
- Education, Legal, Financial (32)
- Advocacy (51)
- Hotlines (14)
- Financial Assistance (14)
- Legal & Financial (22)
- Worker Training (17)

Autism Friendly Services
- After-school programs (19)
- After-school Programs (19)
- Arts & Music Programs (10)
- Camps (26)
- Equine Programs (6)
- Family Services (14)
- Event & Online Calendar (5)

Employment & Post-Secondary Education
- Employment Supports (10)
- Post-secondary Education (11)
- Transition Programs (27)
- Vocational/Adult Services (24)

Evaluation & Diagnosis
- Autism Evaluation (68)
- Behavioral/Developmental (10)
- Psychological & Education (24)
- Specialty (28)
- Specialized Autism Services (24)

Health & Medical
- Dentists (47)
- Social Services (2)
- Adult Treatment & Care Services (8)

Housing & Community Living

Community Events

Events

6 Events within 50 miles of Carlsbad, CA

1. Autism Friendly Event
   4/16/2020
   ASD Mornings at The Nat

2. Autism Friendly Event
   4/27/2020
   Sensory Friendly Movie at AMC

3. Autism Friendly Event
   7/11/2020
   Sensory Friendly Movie at AMC

4. Walk
   12/15/2020
   San Diego Walk

5. Local Event
   11/14/2020
   North County Walk
Information and Resources

• **Dealing with School Closures**

• **How to handle clinical care during social distancing and school/program closures**

• **What should the autism community know about the coronavirus outbreak?**

• Visit our [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com) channels, where we will regularly share the ideas we’re hearing from throughout the community. For local information, join an [Autism Speaks Facebook Group](https://www.facebook.com/groups) in your area.
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Information and Resources

Information by Topic

Autism Speaks is committed to providing the autism community with resources to meet each person and family's unique needs throughout every stage of life. To help with your search for support, we have organized our resources, information, expert advice and personal stories by category.

Financial Planning | Safety | School | Technology
Health and Wellness | Behavioral Challenges | Medical Resources | Transition to Adulthood
Adults | Family Support | Community Life | Miscellaneous