



**Supporting the Ohio Autism Community
During COVID-19 Through Advocacy**

June 3, 2020

An Important Message from Autism Speaks

Racism and discrimination have no place in our society.

Deeply ingrained in the Autism Speaks mission is a commitment to creating a more equitable world for those we serve. The autism community is diverse and broad, including all races, ethnicities, abilities, socioeconomic groups, belief systems and identities.

We stand with our volunteers, our colleagues, our partners and every member of our community in speaking out against racism and speaking up for a world that is more inclusive and empathetic – where all people are respected, protected and valued.

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

Autism Speaks does not provide medical or legal advice or services. Rather, Autism Speaks provides general information about autism as a service to the community. The information provided in this email is not a recommendation, referral or endorsement of any resource, therapeutic method, or service provider and does not replace the advice of medical, legal or educational professionals. Autism Speaks has not validated and is not responsible for any information or services provided by third parties. You are urged to use independent judgment and request references when considering any resource associated with the provision of services related to autism.

Challenges the Autism Community is Facing

- Abrupt discontinuation of educational services
- Closure of day programming
- Closure of clinics
- Shift to telehealth
- Mental health supports
- Lack of connection to community opportunities and supports
- Severe disruption of community employment
- Discontinuation of respite relief for families
- Disruption of much-needed routines
- Loss of income for families
- Challenging behaviors
- Access to healthcare with appropriate supports



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

En Español: 1-888-772-9050

help@autismspeaks.org



Agenda

Welcome
Patti Gold

Executive Director
Field Development
Ohio

Federal Advocacy
Update

David Sitcovsky
Senior Director
Policy and Federal
Government Affairs

State Advocacy
Update

Judith Ursitti
Director State
Government Affairs

Community
Outreach
Colleen Shinn

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Community
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Federal Advocacy Response

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...



State Advocacy Response



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HEALTHCARE

Ohio was approved for an 1135 emergency waiver on April 22, 2020 and again on May 28, 2020 by CMS, the federal Medicaid agency. This allows for greater flexibility which will:

- Temporarily suspend Medicaid fee-for-service prior authorization requirements.
- Provision of services in alternative settings
- Suspend Pre-Admission Screening and Annual Resident Review (PASRR) Level I and Level II Assessments for 30 days
- Modify provider enrollment
- Waive written consent on person centered plans
- Modify timeline on initial and level of care determinations

Additional information can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Telehealth Services

- States have broad flexibility to cover telehealth through Medicaid including the methods of communication (such as telephonic, video technology commonly available on smart phones and other devices) to use.
- Telehealth is important not just for people who are unable to go to the doctor, but also for when it is not advisable to go in person. No federal approval is needed for state Medicaid programs to reimburse providers for telehealth services in the same manner or at the same rate that states pay for face-to-face services.
- Governor DeWine signed an [Executive Order](#) on March 19, 2020, adopting an emergency rule expanding telehealth services for Medicaid providers.

Telehealth Services

PER THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE [BULLETIN](#) EFFECTIVE
MARCH 11, 2020:

Issuers that do not currently provide this coverage are encouraged to implement early adoption of the Ohio law requirements effective January 1, 2021. Under those requirements, issuers are prohibited from excluding coverage for a service that is otherwise covered under the health plan solely because it is delivered as a telemedicine service. Issuers are also required to cover telemedicine services on the same basis and to the same extent that the plan provides coverage for in-person services.



Telehealth Services

Services the autism community could potentially access via telehealth include but are not limited to:

- Behavioral health treatments, including applied behavior analysis
- Therapeutic services, including speech therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy
- Psychological and psychiatric care



HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

Individual Options, Level One, and Self-Empowered Life Funding Waiver (SELF)
Ohio Appendix K Application was approved on May 14, 2020

- Temporarily exceed service limitations
- Temporarily expand setting(s) where services may be provided
- Temporarily permit payment for services rendered by family caregivers or legally responsible individuals if not already permitted under the waiver
- Temporarily modify provider qualifications

Additional details can be found [here](#).

Additional information about DODD services can be found [here](#).

Special Education/Early Intervention

The Ohio Department of Education has information for Students with Disabilities on their website. On the home page, they state:

..it is important to note that recently released U.S. Department of Education guidance addresses a common misunderstanding “that federal disability law presents insurmountable barriers to remote education.” The federal guidance goes on to stress that schools should not opt to close or decline to provide remote instruction, at the expense of students, to address matters pertaining to services for students with disabilities. The Ohio Department of Education wants to encourage school districts to provide education to all their students, including students with disabilities, in the format each district finds best serves the local community.

Find additional information and messaging from the Ohio Department of Education [here](#).
Information for those who utilize the Autism./Jon Peterson Scholarship can be found [here](#).

Special Education/Early Intervention

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

K-12	\$ 462.8 million
Post-secondary	\$ 381 million
Governor's Discretionary	\$ 103.9 million

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

- Hardware, software, communication devices, and other assistive technology
- Appropriate transition from early intervention to special education
- 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)
- Appropriate transition out of special education to adulthood

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www.autismspeaks.org/advocacy

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 | [@AutismVotes](#)





Community Outreach

COVID-19 Information and Resources

These are particularly challenging times for the autism community:

- Disrupted routines, changes in access to services and the uncertainty is taxing for people with autism and their families.
- Parents and caregivers are taking on roles of teacher, service provider and therapists.
- Adults with autism are cut off from services face loss of jobs.
- Autism Speaks is making resources and support available to help our community weather this storm. We are in this together.



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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](#) and [Instagram](#) channels, where we will regularly share the ideas we're hearing from throughout the community. For local information, join an [Autism Speaks Facebook Group](#) in your area.

Information and Resources

[What Is Autism?](#)[Help & Information](#)[Our Work](#)[Get Involved](#)[Que es el autismo?](#)[Donate >](#)

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](#)



Thank You