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.
Supporting the Oklahoma Autism Community During COVID-19 Through Advocacy

July 29, 2020
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
Oklahoma City
Sunday, November 8
Select Sonic locations

Walk Goal: $65,000

Register at:
act.autismspeaks.org/oklahoma city

Oklahoma Autism Speaks Facebook group:
www.facebook.com/groups/AutismSpeaksOklahoma/
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 & clinics
- Shift to telehealth
- Visitation restrictions on those in group homes & nursing homes
- Lack of connection to community opportunities & supports
- Severe disruption to employment
- Discontinuation of respite relief for families
- Disruption of much-needed routines
- Loss of income for families
- Challenging behaviors emerge/re-emerge
- Uncertainty about access to healthcare with appropriate supports
- Uncertainty about new academic year and learning choices
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 Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. in all time zones. Live chat is also available between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. 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

**Who can call?**

We are happy to talk with people with autism, parents, grandparents, friends, teachers, social workers, and everyone in between.

Even if you have no connection to autism but have a question, please feel free to reach out. We assist people of all ages, including children, teens, and adults with autism.
Agenda

Welcome
Maria Krystofik
Area Senior Director, Field Development – North Texas & Oklahoma

Federal Advocacy Update
David Sitcovsky
Senior Director, Policy & Federal Government Affairs

State Advocacy Update
Christa Stevens
Director, State Government Affairs

Community Outreach
Colleen Shinn
Director, Community Outreach – Midwest & South Central
Federal Advocacy Response
Federal COVID Legislation – What has passed?

MARCH 6: COVID 1 – Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations
$8.3 billion in emergency funding

MARCH 18: COVID 2 – Families First Coronavirus Response Act
Included many provisions affecting our community.
Of particular note – it provided emergency paid sick and family leave

MARCH 27: COVID 3 – Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act
$2 trillion in funding for a number of provisions affecting our community.
Of particular note – economic impact payments to most Americans; increased unemployment benefits; assistance for small businesses and employers; billions of dollars for schools; and extends the Money Follows the Person Program

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
Federal COVID Legislation – What’s next?

COVID 4 – Ongoing Negotiations

**MAY 15:** House passed the Heroes Act - $3 trillion relief package. The Senate did not indicate that it would take up this bill. Priorities that were included in the Heroes Act:

- Substantial increase in funding for home & community-based services (HCBS)
- $100 billion for education (in addition to $1 trillion in general assistance for state & local governments)
- Dependents over age 17 retroactively eligible for economic impact payments
- Eligibility for additional $1,200 payments

**JULY 27:** Senate released a $1 trillion relief package proposal. Priorities:

- All dependents eligible for additional $500 economic impact payments
- $105 billion for education

Path from here is unclear . . . both chambers are scheduled to recess on August 7th
Our advocacy priorities during the COVID crisis

- Additional funding for home & 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, sent letters to congressional leadership advocating for many of these priorities.
State Advocacy Response
Impact Statement

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

- **HEALTHCARE**
- **HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES**
- **SPECIAL EDUCATION/EARLY INTERVENTION**
HEALTHCARE

Oklahoma was approved for an 1135 emergency waiver by CMS, the federal Medicaid agency on March 24th, 2020 and June 8, 2020. This allows for a great deal of flexibility related to authorizations/benefits in SoonerCare health plans including the ability to modify:

- Provider Enrollment
- Provision of Services in Alternative Settings
- State Fair Hearing Requests and Appeal Timelines
- Suspend Pre-Admission Screening and Annual Resident Review (PASRR) Level I and Level II Assessments for 30 days
- Temporarily suspend Medicaid fee-for-service prior authorization requirements
- State Plan Amendment (SPA) Flexibilities: Submission Deadline, Public Notice, and Tribal Consultation

Additional information can be found here.
HEALTHCARE - Telehealth Services

For SoonerCare:

Telehealth services expanded during the COVID-19 national and state emergency and were extended through September 30, 2020. OHCA will assess the status of the COVID-19 pandemic toward the end of September to determine if the expansion should be extended.

For Private Health Insurance:

A coalition of autism advocacy Groups wrote to the Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner, requesting similar telehealth coverage by state regulated plans. The OID continues to allow health plans to utilize their discretion.

Blue Cross Blue Shield
Aetna
Healthchoice (state employees)
Impact Statement

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Telehealth Services

• Behavioral health, including applied behavior analysis
• Speech, occupational and physical therapy
• Psychological and psychiatric care
HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES
The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is providing emergency flexibilities for Home and Community Based Waiver Services through Appendix K.

Oklahoma’s Appendix K Application was approved by CMS on April 3, 2020. The specific requests are here and here. OHCA’s summary is here. We are grateful to Oklahoma DDS Director, Beth Scrutchins, for engaging with our Oklahoma COVID Zoom Meeting Group to answer questions about Appendix K.

Some of the approved emergency flexibilities include:

• Temporary modification of –
  – Service scope or coverage
  – Provider qualifications
  – Processes for level of care evaluations or re-evaluations
  – Person-centered service plan development process
• Temporary expansion of settings where services may be provided
• Temporary inclusion of retainer payments to address emergency related issues
• Temporary institution or expansion of opportunities for self-direction
In response, Oklahoma’s Special Education Director, Todd Loftin, joined our Autism Speaks COVID-19 ZOOM meeting to answer questions directly from stakeholders.
**Special Education/Early Intervention**

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

- **K-12**: $104.4 million
- **Post-secondary**: $131.7 million
- **Governor’s Discretionary**: $26.8 million

- 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
- Appropriate transition out of special education to adulthood

Information about Oklahoma’s response to date can be found [here](#).
Connect with us!

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

Follow our advocacy profiles:

Facebook | Autism Speaks Advocacy
Twitter | @AutismVotes
Instagram | @AutismVotes
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Information and Resources

• Virtual Learning and Summer Activities

• Autism Speaks COVID19 Resources

• 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 the Autism Speaks Oklahoma Facebook group.
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
Thank You