

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 Tennessee Autism Community
During COVID-19 Through Advocacy**

July 22, 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

Nashville Walk on Wheels

Saturday, October 31

Nissan Stadium

1 Titans Way, Nashville, TN 37213



To register please visit act.autismspeaks.org/atlanta



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
- Uncertainty about in-person versus virtual learning



Autism Response Team (ART)

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.



We're Here to
Help Chat with Us

Agenda

Welcome
Jessica Tuggle, Manager
Field Development
Tennessee

Federal Advocacy
Update
Karen Summar, Health
Policy Director for
Senator Marsha
Blackburn (Tennessee)
Angela Lello, Senior
Director Policy and
Federal Government
Affairs and

State Advocacy Update
Judith Ursitti, Director
State Government
Affairs

Community Outreach
Janet Williams, Director
Community Outreach,
Diversity, Equity and
Inclusion Lead



Federal Advocacy Response



Special Guest
Karen Summar
*Health Policy Director
Senator Marsha
Blackburn (Tennessee)*



Federal COVID Legislation – What's 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

On May 15th, the House passed the Heroes Act - \$3 trillion relief package. The Senate had not indicated that it will take up this bill.

Priorities that were included in the Heroes Act

- Substantial increase in funding for home and community-based services (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
- Eligibility for additional \$1,200 payments

Senate Majority Leader McConnell is unveiling the Senate's starting point for COVID 4 this week with the goal of passing a bipartisan deal before the recess begins on **August 8th**.

The path from here is unclear. . .

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.



State Advocacy Response





autism
speaks

HEALTHCARE UNDER MEDICAID

Tennessee was approved for an 1135 emergency waiver on [March 31 2020](#) and again on [June 9, 2020](#) by CMS, the federal Medicaid agency. This allows for greater flexibility with healthcare services covered by Medicaid which will:

- Suspend Pre-Admission Screening and Annual Resident Review (PASRR) Level I and Level II Assessments for 30 days
- Modify Provider Enrollment Process
- Provision of Services in Alternative Settings

Find additional information about TennCare's response to COVID-19 [here](#).



Telehealth Services

Medicaid

- 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.
- The most recent update from TennCare indicates telehealth coverage will continue through the end of August 2020. (Additional information can be found [here.](#))

Telehealth Services

Private Health Insurance

The Tennessee Department of Insurance provided clarity to coverage of telehealth by state-regulated health plans by issuing [Bulletin 20-02](#) in early March, stating that

Some insureds may be using telehealth services instead of in-person healthcare services

On March 26, 2020, Governor Lee issued Executive Order #20, which expanded telehealth provisions during the time of the state emergency. It *urged* health plans to cover telehealth. (The state of emergency was subsequently extended to August 29, 2020.)

The Tennessee legislature debated but did not pass a telehealth parity bill during the most recent legislative session. There are indications that the issue will be considered during a potential special session in Tennessee. In the meantime, insurers like Blue Cross Blue Shield have indicated they will be making certain telehealth provisions permanent in nature.

HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

Tennessee's [combined Appendix K application](#) was approved by CMS on May 7, 2020.

It includes flexibilities for the **Statewide Home and Community Based Services (or "Statewide") waiver, Comprehensive Aggregate Cap Home and Community Based Services (or "CAC") Waiver and the Tennessee Self-Determination Waiver Program**

Some of the approved flexibilities are the ability to:

- Temporarily increase the cost limits for entry into the waiver
- Temporarily modify service scope or coverage
- Temporarily exceed service limitations
- Temporarily add services to the waiver to address the emergency situation
- Temporarily expand setting(s) where services may be provided
- Temporarily modify provider qualifications
- Temporarily modify processes for level of care evaluations or re-evaluations
- Temporarily increase payment rates



Special Education

SCHOOL REOPENING TOOLKIT: SPECIAL POPULATIONS WAS RELEASED BY THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ON JUNE 15, 2020

The impact on student learning due to the school closures is difficult to predict. Even as schools work to provide instruction to students through distance learning options, student learning will most likely have been at a different rate than would have occurred within traditional school. Additionally, the school closures occurred near the extended break of summer vacation. This combination will likely result in gaps in learning for most students: general education students, English learners, and students with disabilities alike. Just as supporting our special populations during school closure required additional intentionality, such will be the case upon reopening. Proactively mitigating this regression can help reduce students' needs for additional services, supports, and/or compensatory services. This toolkit will focus on re-opening strategies for continuing educational opportunities and services regarding our special populations, including special education and English learners

Special Education/Early Intervention

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

K-12	\$ 257.5 million
Post-secondary	\$ 223.2 million
Governor's Discretionary	\$ 63.1 million

It is critical that advocacy occur so that Tennessee 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



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](#)





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

- [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 an [Autism Speaks Facebook Group](#) in your area.

Information and Resources



[What Is
Autism?](#)

[Help &
Information](#)

[Our Work](#)

[Get
Involved](#)

[Que es el
autismo?](#)

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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