



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

May 12, 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.

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 for parents
- 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



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



Agenda

Welcome

- Kaitlin Bracken,
Director Field
Development

Federal Advocacy Update

- Angela Lello,
Senior Director
Public Policy

State Advocacy Update

- Judith Ursitti,
Director State
Government
Affairs

Community Outreach

- Colleen Shinn,
Director
Community
Outreach



Federal Advocacy Response

Federal COVID Legislation

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

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.

COVID 4/5

Additional Relief and Stimulus

Timeline still TBD – House will likely introduce/pass bill first – not back in session until at least next week.

What will be contained in these bills: ???

- Examples of potential items:
 - \$ for the public health response
 - Additional economic relief for individuals and small businesses
 - \$ for state and local governments
 - \$ for education
 - Additional nutritional assistance
 - Housing assistance
 - USPS finances
 - Infrastructure investment

Implementation of the COVID bills - A few issues of note

- Economic Impact Payments and SSI
- Distribution of education dollars
- IDEA Waiver Report
- Emergency Paid and Family Leave

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



State Advocacy Response



autism
speaks



HEALTHCARE

Texas was approved for an 1135 emergency waiver by CMS, the federal Medicaid agency. This allows for a great deal of flexibility related to authorizations/benefits in Medicaid health plans including the ability to:

- 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
- Provide Flexibility Around State Fair Hearing Requests and Appeal Timelines
- Provide Flexibility Around Provider Enrollment

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

HEALTHCARE - Telehealth Services

- Texas Medicaid and CHIP health plans can cover teleservices. HHSC has encouraged health plans to use this option when responding to COVID-19.
- For people enrolled in the waiver programs, HHSC has also authorized certain services to be provided via telehealth.
- Private health insurance plans are covering telemedicine. The governor's emergency rule can be found [here](#).

HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES (CLASS AND HCS WAIVERS)

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is providing emergency flexibilities for Home and Community Based Waiver Services through Appendix K.

Texas's Appendix K Application was submitted to CMS on
April 28, 2020

Some of these flexibilities applied for include:

- Extensions for reassessments and reevaluations of individuals who are enrolled in the waiver programs.
- Extending appeal and fair hearing time frames.
- Allowing for remote delivery of certain waiver services.
- Waiving HCBS settings requirements that individuals are able to have visitors of their choosing at any time to minimize the spread of COVID-19.
- Allowances for HCS residence requirements, such as allowing 4-person residences to serve up to 6 people.
- Allowing youth aging out of STAR Kids to stay in STAR Kids rather than transitioning to STAR+PLUS.

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

Special Education/Early Intervention

[TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY MAY 7, 2020 FAQ](#)

There is no defined or correct method to adequately and equitably meet the needs of all students in an unprecedented event such as the current COVID 19 pandemic response. LEAs need to be flexible and consider employing a variety of delivery options as they make reasonable efforts to provide services to students with disabilities.

Above all, LEAs should prioritize health and safety of students, staff, and communities. LEAs should identify and acknowledge service delivery limitations, as well as the need for LEAs to make reasonable efforts to fully implement a student's IEP once school resumes. This requirement to "make every effort..." does not allow a LEAs to decline all services to students with an IEP and only offer compensatory services at a later date

Special Education/Early Intervention

The state of Texas is receiving funds from the COVID-3 stimulus package through the Education Stabilization Fund.

K-12	\$ 1,291.1 billion
Post-secondary	\$ 1,023.6 billion
Governor's Discretionary	\$ 295.4 million

It is critical that advocacy occur so that Texas 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
- 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.



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)

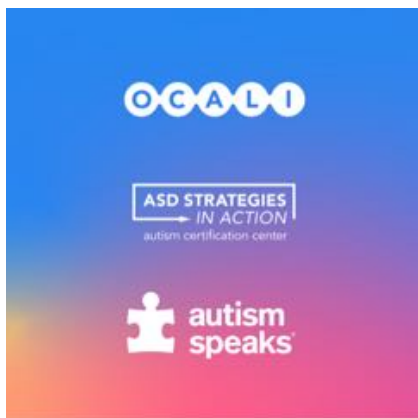
En Español: 1-888-772-9050

help@autismspeaks.org



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.
- NEW April 9 - Autism Certification Center (ACC) and Autism Speaks are teaming up to make 30+ hours of [online video learning resources](#) available at no cost for the autism community.



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