



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

May 8, 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



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

En Español: 1-888-772-9050

help@autismspeaks.org



Agenda

Welcome

- Kisha James, Executive Director, National Capital

Federal Advocacy Update

- Angela Lello, Senior Director Public Policy

State Advocacy Update

- Judith Ursitti, Director State Government Affairs
- Randy Pearson, Vice President, Two Capitols Consulting

Community Outreach

- Janet Williams, 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

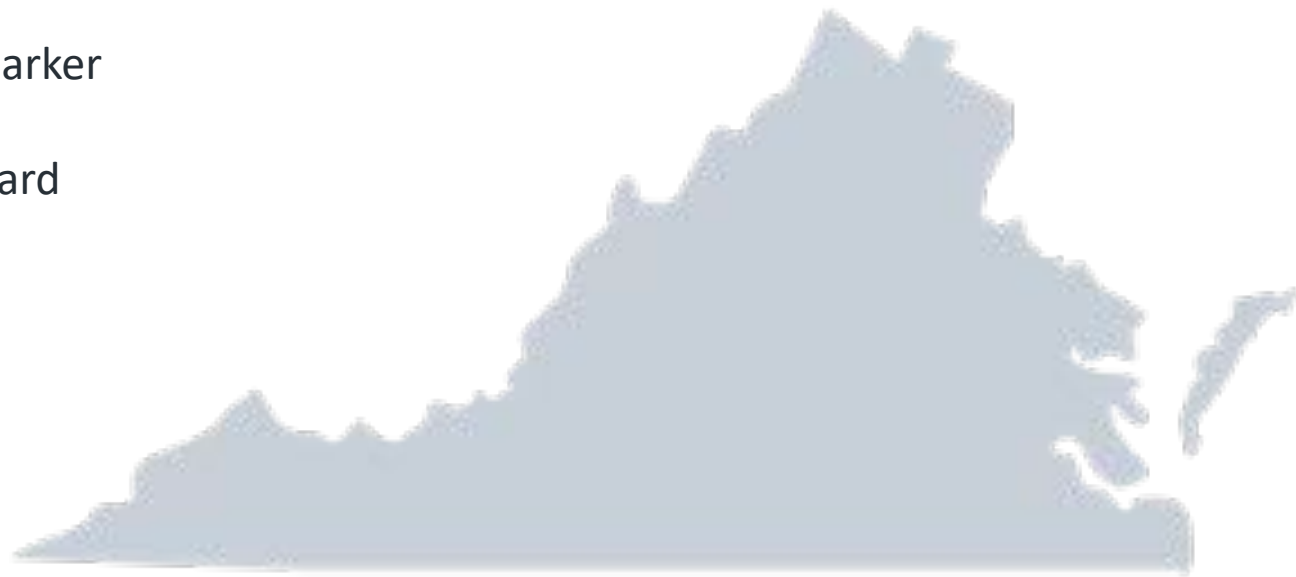
- Additional funding for home and community-based services (HCBS)
- Additional funding to meet the educational needs of students with autism
- Protecting the [rights of students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA) and other laws
- Expanded access to telehealth services for 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

Update from Richmond

- Legislative Session
 - Senate 1031
Senator George Barker
 - House Bill 1503
Delegate Jeion Ward
- Budget
- Special Session





HEALTHCARE

Virginia 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:

- Modify state fair hearing requests and appeal timeline
- Temporarily suspend Medicaid fee-for-service prior authorization requirements.
- Extend pre-existing authorizations through the end of the public health emergency.

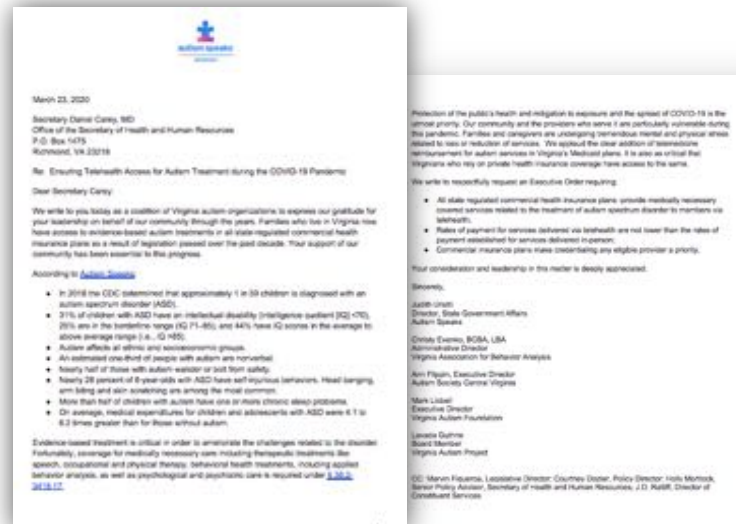
Additional information can be found [here](#).

HEALTHCARE - Telehealth Services

Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) issued [guidance](#) on March 20, 2020 expanding telehealth coverage to all Medicaid providers. This includes services like:

- Behavioral health
- Early intervention
- Waiver services

A coalition of autism organizations wrote to Secretary Daniel Carey, MD Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources on March 23 requesting that private health insurance plans follow suit.



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.

Virginia's Appendix K Application was approved by CMS on April 20, 2020. You can find the applications [here](#) and [here](#).

Some of these flexibilities include:

- For DD waivers, permit the delivery of Group Day Services, Community Engagement, and Community Coaching in residential settings to include licensed settings delivering Group Home Residential, Sponsored Residential and Supported Living as well as the private unlicensed homes of individuals.
- Temporarily modify provider qualifications
- Temporarily include retainer payments to address emergency related issues
- Allow spouses and parents of minor children to provide personal care services
- Allow an extension for reassessments and reevaluations for up to one year past the due date

Special Education/Early Intervention

VDOE SPECIAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT SERVICES (SESS) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Special education has always been meant to address student specific needs in the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and, as such, what is being done for a particular student in one local educational agency (LEA) may not be appropriate for a student in another LEA. In fact, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has advised school divisions to develop a plan that meets its own individual needs, so long as what is put in place conforms to what is regulatorily required. Of vital importance in the development of this plan is keeping in mind that students with disabilities must be served and accommodated when instruction is provided to their non-disabled peers.

Special Education/Early Intervention

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

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| K-12 | \$ 222.1 million |
| Post-secondary | \$ 320.2 million |
| Governor's Discretionary | \$ 65.4 million |

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

- Hardware, software, communication devices, and other assistive technology
- Direction from the governor to localities to continue to honor their existing contracts with private day special education schools
- 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

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 | [@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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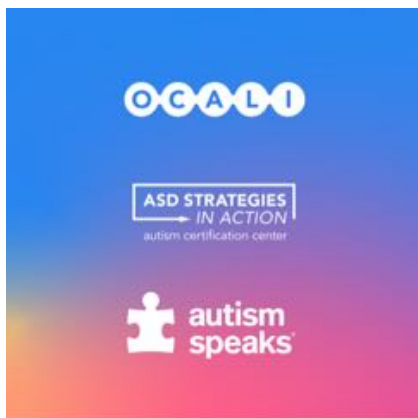
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Information and Resources

- [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.
- 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