



Angels Bridging Gaps
Palm Bay Autism Support Group
www.angelsbridginggaps.org

Contact Info: Jackie Yearby Jbyearby@angelsbridginggaps.org

Newsletter

May 12, 2009

Florida Autism Mandate: What it Means to You

By Danielle Howd

On May 2, 2009 Florida passed the Florida Senate Bill 2654. Included in that bill is the Autism Mandate. Here is a brief overview of what this mandate means for families affected by autism.

The mandate applies to the following disorders on the ASD spectrum, which include Autism, Aspergers and PDD NOS. According to the mandate health insurance plans and contracts issued or renewed on or beyond April 1, 2009 must cover:

- Screenings for diagnosis of autism
- Autism Treatments such as speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy and applied behavior analysis by certified, licensed professionals.

Individuals covered must be 18 years of age or still in high school. They must have been diagnosed as having a developmental disability at eight years old or younger.

Limits to coverage include:

- An annual limit of \$36,000 which may not exceed \$200,000 in total lifetime benefits.
- General exclusions and limitations but coverage may not be denied due to the need of habilitative services.
- Limited to treatment and treatment plan prescribed by physician of insured.

The mandate goes on to further indicate that coverage may not be subject to dollar limits, deductibles or coinsurance provisions that are less favorable to those provided for physical illnesses, with some exception. Also benefits and coverage available to a insured party under a health insurance plan may not be limited to an individual with ASD.

Individuals with developmental disabilities may not be denied or offered restricted coverage for medically necessary services.

The groups affected by this mandate include state group insurance programs, other group health policies, health maintenance contracts and health benefit plans. It does not affect individual market or individually underwritten contracts or contracts from small employers.

The mandate, however, may not be enforced against an insurance company or health maintenance organization if they sign what is called the developmental disabilities contract by April 1, 2009. However, if the company does not become in compliance with all the terms of the developmental disabilities contract by April 1, 2010, then the Office of Insurance Regulation may enforce the autism mandate.

Events

5/13 - Planning Advice for Special Needs Children or Dependents
Space Coast Early Intervention Center, Melbourne 6:00pm-9:30pm. The MetDESK will provide planning advice for families. Call 610-9906

5/18 - Amer-I-can Youth Program
King Center, Melbourne 5pm-7pm
Jim Brown, Actor and NFL player talks to youth about "The Responsibility of Self-Determination". Free. No RSVP required. Call 674-0808

5/22 - Kids Night Out *Grant Street Community Center, Melbourne.* 6:30-9pm. Cost \$3. Call 674-5723

5/23 - Night Hike at the Zoo
Brevard Zoo, Melbourne. 5-9pm. Guided flashlight safari. Crafts, games and hands on animal presentations. Recommended for ages 5-12. Call 254-9453

5/23 -5/24 - Caribbean Jamboree
Palm Bay Regional Park, Palm Bay 9am-7pm The event will feature various sports, entertainment, food vendors and activities. Call 728-2558 or visit www.bcasca.com

5/25 - Mother/Son Dance *Eau Gallie Civic Center, Melbourne.* There will be treats, coffee bar, games and prizes. Purchase tickets in advance. Call 255-4608

5/27 - FIT Workshop - Using the Scientific Methods in Everyday Life *FIT, Melbourne.* 6:30pm-8pm. Call 674-8104

Our upcoming Events

5/16 - Friends and Family Community Picnic *Malabar Baptist Church, Malabar* 11:30am. A picnic for members of the church, their family, friends and members of the community. Food, fellowship, fun and horse rides. Free. 723-1602

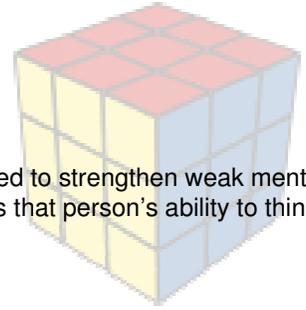
5/25 - Bowling - Shore Lanes, Palm Bay 4pm-5pm Come out and join us. \$2.99 including shoes.

5/26 - Parent Support Meeting - Malabar Baptist Church, Malabar 6pm-7pm. Call 723-1602

Treatments & Therapies

Cognitive Training and Autism

Key Messages and Q & A



How can cognitive skills training help people with autism?

Simply put: It helps by growing a better brain. Intensive game-like mental exercises are used to strengthen weak mental skills like memory, attention, and auditory processing. When those skills are improved, so is that person's ability to think, reason and process information.

Does it work?

Absolutely. When people strengthen their mental skills, they actually become faster, smarter, more efficient thinkers. Confidence and self-esteem soar and people are willing to try new things. This is so important to those with autism. Often they leave cognitive training with an ability to look someone in the eye, make and keep friends, do more things independently and have the confidence to tackle socializing on a daily basis.

Is there proof that it works?

Every student's cognitive abilities are tested before and after training. Time after time those test results prove that skills improve. However, quite often parents don't really care about those post-training results because they have already seen dramatic changes in their child. They see a more confident, happier person who's doing better in school and finally has friends and is looking at the future with hope. That's all the proof they need.

Is it hard to do brain training with a child with autism?

It can be. Each child is uniquely challenged, which is just one reason why brain training works so well. Everyone gets a highly individualized program based on their own needs and goals. All sessions are one-on-one with a personal trainer, which allows for the development of a strong relationship. This trainer has to be extremely insightful and patient while working with people with autism in order to figure out how to reach that student.

Can it work for everyone?

Yes and no. It can work for anyone who has the ability to speak and understand directions, which unfortunately isn't always the case for people with autism.

Does this cure autism?

There is no cure for autism. But brain training can help people with autism move much more closer to recovery, where the effects of autism may be hardly noticeable. Brain training is not a cure-all for all autism, but it is one more proven, valuable tool we can use to help remove the limitations of autism and help people lead a better life.

To find out more about how cognitive brain training can help your child with autism, call Terri Clark at LearningRx at 727-3996 or visit the website: www.learningrx.com

Introduction Musical Therapy to Treat Autism

By Jonathan Sullivan

Musical therapy is a relatively new treatment method for autism patients, but one that should not be overlooked when discussing options. Patients who receive musical therapy often showed great improvement in temperament and learning skills. Music connects to the non-verbal part of our brains, making it a perfect therapy for disorders in which the patient has trouble communicating, such as autism. Research this innovative treatment method if you are looking for some help with autism and haven't had much luck in the past.

Musical therapy is effective because it can be used in conjunction with learning social skills. Music is a very non-threatening medium for patients, and many games can be played using music to help improve social and behavioral skills. By encouraging eye contact while singing or using instruments that need to get close to the face, musical therapy can help autistic individuals break social barriers.

The number one way that musical therapy can help children, as well as older autistic patients, is by helping with the development of speech skills. Music is a way to connect the verbal and non-verbal functions in the brain. Autistic individuals may have various forms of speech problems. Some can only hum, grunt, or make other non-word noises, while others babble nonsensical phrases or cries. Still others gain the capability to put together phrases and

sentences to communicate with the world, although these usually lack emotion. Autistic people are known for monotone voices. However, no matter how skilled the individual is with speech, he or she can participate in musical therapy by clapping rhythms, humming along, or doing simple echoing songs.

Autistic individuals are commonly found to be particularly good at music. Some, for instance, have perfect pitch. Others can play a particular instrument very well, with little instruction. Even if he or she shows no genius musical ability by normal standards, you may find that a particularly hard to deal with autistic person has abilities in music that exceed his or her other abilities. A musical therapist can use music as a way to link this kind of learning with other kinds of learning, not only as speech development and social behavioral development as previously discussed, but also as a way to communicate emotions and develop memory.

By using all of these techniques in conjunction with one another, musical therapy can work wonders with people who are autistic. Trained professionals can use music to teach children and others how to communicate in nonverbal ways, making it easier for patients to learn. Research the musical therapy option to provide you or your child with another choice when treating autism.



Look out for upcoming music classes offered through Angels Bridging Gaps!

Education is Key



I.E.P.'s and What Every Parent Needs to Know

By Danielle Howd

When it comes to I.E.P.'s most parents feel left in the dark. Is my child getting all the services they need? What if I don't agree with the services I am being given? How do I fight to get what I think my child deserves? All these and more are questions that go through a parent's mind when they are at an I.E.P. meeting and handed this packet of paper. The most important thing you can do as a parent is make sure you are educated about your child's condition and the services your child will require. When we are educated we are more confident and able to argue why we feel our child is entitled to these services.

At the I.E.P. workshop, perhaps the greatest piece of information I was given was, "If it isn't in writing, it doesn't exist". If you are worried that the services you are receiving for your child are not enough and you want these concerns addressed, put it in writing. Make sure you keep a copy for yourself as well. If you do not agree with something that is on the I.E.P., then write something as simple as "does not agree", in the parent concerns box before you sign the I.E.P.. Remember just because it is on the I.E.P. does not mean it is set in stone. It is a living document and changes as your child and your concerns for your child change.

The most important part of the I.E.P. and what drives it is the PLEP (Present Level of Educational Performance). The goals and objectives set are unique to your child and should be attainable. Remember that this is an individual education plan and as the parent you know your child better than anyone else. Educate yourself, know your child's condition and how to read an I.E.P. and remember you have rights and a say about what goes into your child's I.E.P.

For more information, feel free to contact me at danielle_howd84@yahoo.com.

Cool Stuff

Whatcha doing for the summer?

School is almost out and kids will have more free time on their hands. Here's a compilation of a few summer programs available in our area.

Rockers Summer Camp for Children with Disabilities

6 to 22 years of age
3 to 1 children/staff ratio
Pow/Mia Community Center
5995 North US 1 Melbourne, FL 32935
321-255-4436
9am-4pm July 6-August 7, 2009
Weeks 1-5 for \$60.00
Call 321-255-4436

Frontier Travel Camp Special Needs Summer Tours/Travel For high functioning young adults

8101 Biscayne Blvd Ste 512
Miami Shores, FL 33138
305-895-1123
www.frontiertravelcamp.com

Summer Day Camp at Palm Bay Regional Park

1st through 6th grades
Outdoor games, sports, art, trips and more
June 1 - August 7 9am-4pm
When registering make sure you identify
Children with special needs on the form.
Call 321-255-4400

Kindergarten and Beyond Space Coast Early Intervention Center

Ages 5-8
Designed to provide consistency and
routine for all children
Full summer program
7:30am-6:00pm
Call 321-729-6858

HELPING HAND
| Financial Aid for Autism Families |

Grant deadline approaching. Postmark
Your mailed applications by May 15, 2009

Grants up to \$1500 to families that meet the following three criteria:

1. Child must be birth to age 18
2. Reside in the U.S.A.
3. Diagnosed with an ASD

Attach a copy of physician's ASD diagnosis and tax return and submit!
<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/helpinghand.php>

Angels Bridging Gaps

Invites you to the

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF MALABAR

Sat. May 16
11:00am

Friends and Family Picnic

FREE
HORSE
RIDES

First Baptist Church
Of Malabar
1665 Malabar Rd
Malabar, FL 32950
321-723-1602

PICNIC



Fun Stuff

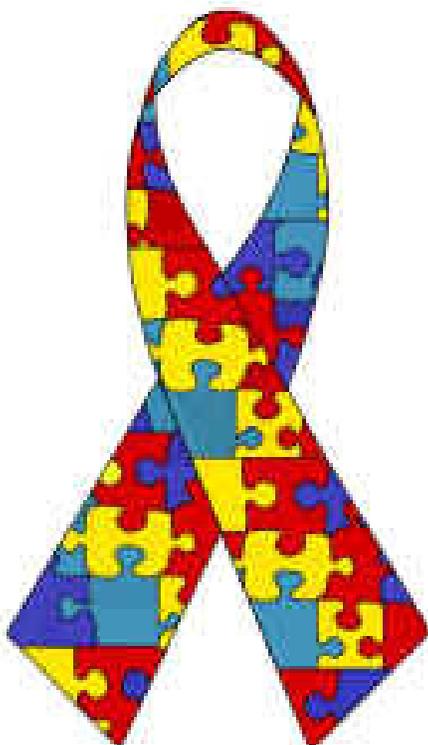
LETTER TILES

Unscramble the tiles to reveal a message that relates to the title below.

Covered by the mandate

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| U | P | A | D | A | S | P | E | O | C | C | I | C | A | L | , | T | I | O | B | A | | |
| E | C | H | I | E | S | | A | N | T | H | E | , | P | N | A | L | H | Y | S | R | A | P |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |



Color in the second Autism Awareness Ribbon to match the first one.

