

FY 2011 Report to Legislature Autism Treatment Account

Overview

The Autism Treatment Account was established in March 2010 by the Utah Legislature with the passing of House Bill 311. This account is a restricted special revenue account for the receipt and expenditure of funds to be used for assistance in funding service and treatment to eligible Utah children less than 8 years of age with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). In addition to legislative appropriations, the account may accept “gifts, grants, donations, and bequests of real property, personal property, or services, from any source, or any other conveyance that may be made to the account from private sources, interest and other earnings derived from the account money.”

The Executive Director of the Utah Department of Health is responsible for administering the Account, with staff support from the Bureau of Children with Special Health Care Needs Bureau (CSHCN), in the Division of Family Health and Preparedness. Once funds become available and policies and procedures are established, they may be expended to:

- a. assist eligible families of young children with ASD with the cost of evaluating and treating children with an autism spectrum disorder;
- b. provide young children with treatments for ASD that utilize early intensive behavior therapy; and
- c. provide grants to persons or organizations to provide the services described in a or b.

Autism Treatment Fund Advisory Committee

The legislation required establishment of an Autism Treatment Account Advisory Committee for the purpose of recommending how funds should be managed and expended. The five members serving on the committee include Harper Randall, MD (representing Utah Department of Health), Peter Nicholas, PhD (providing expertise in treatment of ASD), Paul Carbone, MD (pediatrician), Leeann Whiffen (parent advocate/family member), and Cheryl Smith (president of the Autism Council of Utah). Leeann Whiffen was selected by the committee to serve as chair.

The committee has held three meetings to date: February, July and September 2011, with an additional meeting scheduled for December 2011. The committee has drafted a rule governing; 1) criteria and methods for selecting service and treatment providers, and 2) conflict of interest within the Advisory Committee. They have also approved a policy dealing with committee membership. A draft request for proposal (RFP) has been written that will be used to prioritize and allocate funds. The RFP will be reviewed and finalized when funds become available.

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