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There is hope...



F.E.A.T. of Southern Nevada

Families for Effective Autism Treatment

December 2, 2002

Dear Member,

Families for Effective Autism Treatment of Southern Nevada (FEAT) is a parent volunteer, non-profit 501(c)3 group that serves families whose children are affected by autism. Our tax ID number is 88-0363321. FEAT holds monthly parent support group meetings, operates a lending library of parent-teacher materials and lobbies public agencies for programs to serve this special population of children.

We receive phone calls daily, from confused, emotional parents seeking guidance for their newly diagnosed son or daughter. There are over 580 children with autism identified by the Clark County School District alone in Nevada. Our volunteers try to help these parents navigate the system of diagnosis, respite, treatment, and services by sharing their own experiences. What we are most proud of is that, because of our organization, no parent ever has to feel they are alone in their struggle with their child.

FEAT urges you to support and encourage the Governor and Legislators to include billing codes under Medicaid for Autism specific interventions such as behavior intervention, social skills training.

Nevada Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders need autism specific interventions such as behavior intervention to be a covered procedure under the Nevada State Medicaid plan.

This would save the individual agencies money because of the matching Federal dollars.

Nevada Children with Behavior Disorders need autism specific interventions such as behavior intervention to be a covered procedure under the Nevada State Medicaid plan.

Thank you for meeting with me today.

Jan M. Crandy
Director

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ABA cost effectiveness at a glance

About half of the children with autism who are treated with an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program will recover enough to attend regular school classes and become productive members of society. Most others improve enough to live in the community and not be institutionalized. ABA effectiveness has been proven by years of research and application. It is the medical treatment for autism recommended by the United States Surgeon General in his 1999 report to the nation.

Untreated, the social, emotional and financial costs of autism to affected individuals, their families and to state and federal agencies are daunting. Left untreated, each child affected by autism will require a lifetime of specialized care. The cost of appropriate educational programs for school-age children with autism is often \$30,000 per year or more. The cost of a residential school or institution, such as a developmental center, is approximately \$80,000 to \$100,000 or more per individual per year. It is estimated that the cost of autism in the U.S. alone is at least \$12 billion per year. The costs in human dignity and self-worth are incalculable.

A recent study by the Center for the Economics of Mental Health reports that the estimated lifetime costs for one person's care for untreated autism is \$4.35 million. Assuming a life span of 70 years, this would equate to an annual cost in the U.S. of \$31 billion for the entire autism population.

A year 2000 report for the Mental Health Foundation estimated the lifetime cost of a severely affected lower functioning child at nearly \$5 million and for a high functioning child at \$2 million. The greatest costs are for living support (70%) and day activities (14%); much less is spent on education (7%). Evidence suggests that even moderate increases in educational provision could potentially result in major savings in later living costs.

Expenses over an average lifetime for one person with autism

With ABA treatment	12 years of special education	Untreated High functioning	Untreated Low Functioning
\$60,000	\$360,000	\$2,000,000	\$4,000,000

The report continues, estimating the economic consequences to parents of having an autistic child living at home include an annual loss of earnings estimated as at least 1/6th of the average disposable income.

With treatment, even if the best outcome is not achieved, the difference in the cost of care between a low functioning and high functioning adult is considerable. No matter which estimates you use, funding ABA programs will save Nevada State millions of dollars over the long run.

Nevada Kids Count on December 2001 stated there was 671 children in the state of Nevada between 3 and 22 identified with autism, we know many children are not counted because they are under other labels or identified under multiply impairments. Clark County School District indicated they had 581 children labled with the single lable of autism in June of 2002. And were funding only 38 of those children with home ABA programs. Seven of which are in a pilot program ran by CCSD, the remainder receiving services supervised by out-of-state providers.

If national stats are correct according to Nevada's Live birth data 202 children will be born with autism this year alone. These figures do not count adults or children under 3. These numbers will continue to increase at rate of 10 to 17 percent per year the Austim Society of America believes. Do we want to spend Nevada's money now on intervention or start building group homes or worst institutions at an alarming number.