

NACDD Position Statement with Policy Recommendations Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability characterized by impaired verbal and non-verbal communication skills and social interactions, and restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behaviors ranging in impact from mild to significantly disabling.¹ ASD is the fastest growing segment of the developmental disabilities population, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now estimating that one in 110 of U.S. children (and one in 70 boys) is diagnosed with ASD.² This dramatic increase in prevalence has made ASD a top national priority, engaging the collaborative efforts of both federal agencies and private organizations, and resulting in a variety of federal policy proposals specific to ASD.

NACDD and its member Councils support programs and policies that benefit all people with developmental disabilities, including ASD, and their families. Although NACDD's work usually focuses on programs and policies that benefit the broader developmental disability community rather than those which target a specific developmental disability such as ASD, NACDD strongly supports diagnosis-specific efforts that result in addressing the needs of the targeted population. Moreover, given the co-occurrence of various disabilities, as well as functional limitations that may be attributes of a variety of different diagnoses, NACDD recognizes that these efforts will often benefit a broader population of people with developmental disabilities.

NACDD supports legislation, policies and programs that help determine causes for ASD and its symptoms, provide effective treatments and services, and provide information and support to people with ASD and their families and to anyone involved in providing them with services and supports.

Policy Recommendations

- Support reauthorization of the Combating Autism Act or similar legislation. Such legislation has brought remarkable progress since it was first enacted by continuing the work of identifying the causes of ASD and the best practices for diagnosis and treatment. Without new legislation, the Leadership Education and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) and related programs will end – disrupting the interdisciplinary training and practice of professionals to identify the symptoms of ASD and promptly diagnose and treat it. Programs authorized by CAA are leading to earlier diagnosis and more timely early intervention services which promise better outcomes. CAA should be reenacted without a hard sunset, allowing it to continue without interruption.

¹ Report to Congress on Activities Related to Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Developmental Disabilities Under the Combating Autism Act of 2006 (FY 2006-FY 2009), by Office of Autism Research Coordination, National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services. Posted on website of Congressman Mike Doyle (D-PA)

<http://doyle.house.gov/legislation/2011%2001%2006%20HHS%20report%20on%20RTC%20on%20Activities%20Related%20to%20ASD.pdf>

² "Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorders – Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network" United States, 2006, *MMWR* SS.2009, 58:1-20

- Support other legislation, policies and programs that will help diagnose and treat ASD effectively, enable research into the causes of ASD and efficacy of treatments, provide for inter-disciplinary treatment and therapies for ASD, and provide information and support to people with ASD and their families. In the 112th Congress, such legislation includes, but is not limited to, the Autism Services and Workforce Acceleration Act.
- Support programs that provide assistance and support to children and adults with ASD and their families including early intervention and education, transition from school to work, home and community based services, employment, health, recreation, housing and transportation, with an accompanying focus on training for support staff and professionals across all service systems.