

Autism Spectrum Disorder Task Force 2019 Annual Report Autism Spectrum Disorder State Plan



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Overview

Pursuant to North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) 50-06-32, the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Task Force provides an annual report to the governor and the Legislative Council regarding the status of the ASD State Plan.

Autism Spectrum Disorder Task Force Members and Duties

Senate Bill No. 2174 (2009), codified as Section 50-06-32, established an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Task Force consisting of the State Health Officer or designee, the executive director of the Department of Human Services or designee, the director of special education, the executive director of the Protection and Advocacy Project or designee, and the following members appointed by the Governor:

- A pediatrician with expertise in the area of autism spectrum disorder;
- A psychologist with expertise in the area of autism spectrum disorder;
- A college of education faculty member with expertise in the area of autism spectrum disorder;
- A behavioral specialist;
- A licensed teacher with expertise in the area of autism spectrum disorder;
- An occupational therapist;
- A representative of a health insurance company doing business in this state;
- A representative of a licensed residential care facility that provides care and services to individuals with autism spectrum disorder;
- A representative who is an enrolled member of a federally recognized Indian tribe;
- An adult self advocate with autism spectrum disorder;
- A parent of a child with autism spectrum disorder;
- A family member of an adult with autism spectrum disorder; and
- A member of the legislative assembly.

The ASD Task Force meets on a quarterly basis to examine the following topics:

- early intervention services
- family support services that would enable an individual with ASD to remain in the least restrictive home-based or community setting
- programs transitioning an individual with ASD from a school-based setting to adult day programs and workforce development programs
- the cost of providing services
- the nature and extent of federal resources that can be directed to the provision of services for individuals with ASD

The ASD State Plan is developed and implemented by the Task Force. There are two workgroups for children and adults made up of Task Force members as well as other stakeholders. The workgroups meet between Task Force meetings to review the State Plan, develop policy recommendations and plan for future activities.

The Task Force is to develop an ASD State Plan and continue to review and periodically update or amend the plan to serve the needs of individuals with ASD. The Task Force is to provide an annual report to the Governor and the Legislative Council regarding the status of the ASD State Plan.

ASD State Plan Updates

The State Plan goals and the progress during 2019 is summarized below.

Children: Birth Through Age 18

- Assure that individuals with suspected ASD receive an appropriate diagnosis as soon as possible.
 - The Task Force gathered information regarding multidisciplinary clinics being held across the state to assess access, waiting lists and how the clinics are funded. Although arena style (where all providers are in the room at the same time) multidisciplinary clinics are best practice for diagnosis of ASD, most health care payers do not cover them. The Task Force is investigating how more clinics might be funded.
- Review and provide recommendations on the current centralized location(s) for information on ASD.
 - Currently, the DHS website hosts the ASD Task Force webpage. The Task Force has made recommendations on additions to the webpage and ways to drive more traffic to the webpage.
- Establish a model identifying training and education opportunities currently available that address the needs of diverse stakeholders.
 - In spring 2019, the Task Force conducted a stakeholder survey to assess training needs. Over the next year, trainings will be offered to families, providers and the public on a variety of topics and in a variety of settings (online, in person, conferences/workshops, etc.).

Adults: Age 18 and up (including transition age)

- Identify the needs and service gaps for adults with ASD.
 - Employment supports were identified as a need for adults with ASD. The Task Force recommended that the 2019 Legislative Assembly provide funding for 24 additional Extended Services slots for adults with ASD, to assist them with maintaining employment. The legislature adopted this recommendation and the new slots will be available in January 2020.
- Strengthen supports for transitions from adolescent to adult services.
 - Several workshops across the state have been delivered to families that focus on transition issues.
- Develop more opportunities for adults with ASD to be valued, contributing members of their communities based on their unique strengths, differences and challenges.
 - The adult workgroup of the Task Force is developing a public awareness campaign to help the public understand the challenges adults with ASD face.
 - Plans are in place to provide stipends for adults with ASD to attend the State Autism Conference in April 2020.

In 2020, the Task Force plans to reorganize its workgroups in order to address topics such as education/training, public awareness and early diagnosis.