



## NEWSLETTERS

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Opioid dependence treatment in the privacy of a doctor's office



# JUNE 2013: AUTISM HERO: THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR CALIFORNIA'S AUTISM INSURANCE MANDATE

Category: Newsletters

# GREETINGS!

Please help us publicly acknowledge California Senator Darrell Steinberg for mandating that insurance companies cover behavioral therapy for persons with autism.

## **AUTISM HERO: The Man Responsible for California's Autism Insurance Mandate**

**Senator Darrell Steinberg tells why he authored SB946, and how he managed to get it passed!**

**What spurred you to author SB946 and take on this cause?**



When I was appointed as the chair of the California Legislative Commission on Autism in 2005, I vividly recall parents who had to mortgage their homes in order to pay for treatments. To me, that was unacceptable and SB 946, the Autism Insurance Mandate, was the only remedy. We heard from medical experts and the science was clear that early intervention treatments were similar to other forms of medical therapy. Most importantly, behavioral therapy was successful in improving the lives and outcomes for many with ASD. There can be no doubt that ASD is a significant brain-based disorder, and treating it is no different than treating a broken arm or a heart condition.

**What difficulties/opposition did you encounter in seeking passage of this bill? How did you forge ahead?**

Some insurers pegged behavioral therapies as experimental or ineffectual and then, after independent

medical reviews sided with families, some insurers denied coverage by claiming that the therapy isn't medical. SB 946 simply codified that behavioral health treatments for ASD are consistent with other forms of medical therapy, and requires health plans and insurance companies to cover ASD treatments. With this mandate set to expire in 2014, I introduced and successfully passed SB 126 to extend coverage until 2019. We need to continue ensuring a bright future for all children and families.

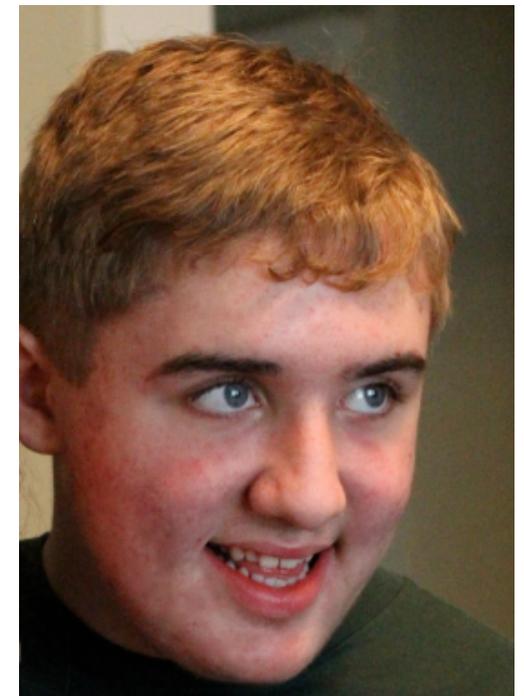
If your child has benefited from the Autism Health Insurance Mandate, please consider dropping Senator Steinberg a brief [thank you email](#).

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## **FAMILY STORY: 12-year-old receives ABA from Anthem Blue Cross with AHIP assistance**

Aidan Daniels, 12 Aidan Daniels, age 12, was making steady progress with Applied Behavioral Analysis when the regional center told his family that Aidan would need to obtain ABA through their private insurance due to state funding cuts. Despite an autism diagnosis and documented need, Anthem Blue Cross denied Anne Daniels' request for ABA. The insurer also rejected her appeal. "They weren't taking me seriously, and I felt that I wasn't going to get anywhere," said Daniels. "I felt like the man at the insurance company was just sort of patting me on the head and tolerating me."

Aidan's progress and future were at stake and like most autism moms, Daniels was not about to give up. Daniels sought help from the Autism Health Insurance Project. "I was starting to sound like an impassioned mom and AHIP Executive Director Dr. Fessel was able to elevate it to a level of



professionalism and detachment. She knew all the players, which was really helpful. She wrote letters and was just ON it. The appeal went to Independent Medical Review with the California Department of Insurance. At the end of the day, AHIP was successful. It was so cool."

Today Aidan is back on his ABA program. He is learning to zip his jacket, wash his own hands, put items in the garbage and so much more. "They are basic tasks that most people take for granted but it's without a doubt something that he needs and something that we as a family are benefiting from. I am so grateful for all that Karen did for us." Aidan is one of many children who have been helped by AHIP's sliding scale program, which offers direct assistance to families being challenged by their health plans.



## Healthy Families & Medi-Cal Update

A temporary solution is in the works for hundreds of California children who have lost their ABA services after being transferred from Healthy Families to Medi-Cal.

Our featured Autism Hero, Senator Steinberg, has included in the 2013-2014 state budget a request for \$50 million to fund ABA services for children receiving Medi-Cal, who do not receive the service through a regional center. While this is only a temporary solution, Steinberg, along with Senator Hernandez (D-San Gabriel Valley) and Assembly Member and Speaker John Perez (D-Los Angeles) have bills in the works (SB1X1 and AB1X1) that will fund ABA for Medi-Cal patients permanently!

Since families were first transferred to Medi-Cal and began losing ABA services, AHIP has been working tirelessly to help resolve this injustice! We have been educating public officials, publishing op-eds, and fighting on behalf of individual families. Progress is being made!

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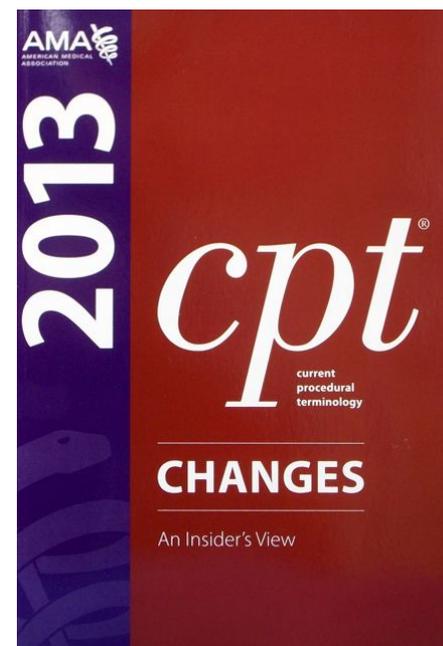
## 2013 CPT Code Changes & Mental Health Reimbursements

An overhaul of CPT (Current Procedural Terminology) codes went into effect January 2013, and you may find your reimbursement shrinking if your child's mental health provider is not using the correct combination of codes.

Coding matters because it determines what providers get paid, or in the case of out-of-network providers, it determines how much families will get reimbursed. A significant change relates to 90862, otherwise known as a "med check." This code, and its previous reimbursement rate, no longer exist. The code that has replaced the med check is 90833; it bills at a much lower dollar amount. However, under the new coding structure providers can check multiple CPT codes. If the "med check" includes psychotherapy for example, providers can designate 90833 (med check) AND 90832 (30 min psychotherapy) for a higher reimbursement rate

Behavioral Healthcare published an extremely helpful article, including CPT code charts, on this topic. Check it out for more information or feel free to [contact AHIP](#) for help.

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## Autism Speaks Makes \$7500 Expansion Grant to AHIP

We would like to thank Autism Speaks for expanding its \$25,000 grant to AHIP with an additional \$7500. This money allows us to continue advocacy to pass legislation that benefits children with autism who are on Medi-Cal and Healthy Families.

### Grant Opportunities & Donations Sought

We are always on the lookout for new grant/donation opportunities. Please [contact us](#) if you have any ideas. Tax-deductible donations are

also always very much appreciated. Please consider a donation to the Autism Health Insurance Project. [DONATE HERE.](#)

## KEEP WATCH: Autism Bills in the California Legislature

Bills that will benefit persons with autism are making their way through the legislature. AHIP stays on top of these bills, educating legislators on the needs of our families with autism.

Bill	Author	Sponsor	Content	Status
<b>SB 126</b>	Steinberg	Autism Speaks ARCA ACAO	Extends the provisions of SB 946 (California's autism insurance mandate coverage) until July 1, 2019.	Approved by the full Senate. Awaits a policy hearing in the Assembly.
<b>SB 158</b>	Correa		Establishes an Autism Demonstration Program within regional centers to	Approved by the Senate Appropriations

<b>SB 138</b>			improve services in a more culturally and linguistically competent manner for underserved communities.	Committee. Awaits a vote by the full Senate.
<b>SB 163</b>	Hueso	Autism Speaks State Council Dev. Disabilities	Would require regional centers to pay any co-payment, co-insurance, or deductible required under a health plan or health insurance policy that provides coverage for services included in a regional center consumer's Individual Program Plan or Individualized Family Service Plan.	Held in committee. Watch for Action Alerts!
<b>SB 208</b>	Lara		Often regional centers contract with outside providers to deliver services. SB208 would require regional centers to evaluate if outside providers can deliver culturally and linguistically competent services and supports. This would assure that disabled regional center clients in minority communities are having their needs appropriately met.	Approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee. Awaits a vote by the full Senate.
<b>SB 319</b>	Price	Special Needs Network	SB319 is essentially a good housekeeping bill. It would provide guidelines and reporting requirements for the regional center and the State Department of Developmental Services. Being held accountable on paper is always a good idea for state disability agencies.	Held in committee.
<b>SB 321</b>	Price	Special Needs Network	SB321 is a taking stock and accountability bill. It would require the State Department of Developmental Services to establish	Held in committee.

			annual performance objectives for regional centers that are related to equity, diversity and cultural competence.	
<b>SB 367</b>	Block	UC Riverside SEARCH Program	SB367 would require the Department of Developmental Services to require regional centers to develop annual strategic plans that address issues of cultural and linguistic competency.	Approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee. Awaits a vote by the full Senate.
<b>SB 468</b>	Emmerson	Autism Society of America	SB468 would establish a "Self-Determination Program" that allows regional center consumers to use an individual budget for the purchase of service and supports at the consumer's discretion.	Approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee. Awaits a vote by the full Senate.
<b>SB 555</b>	Correa	Disability Rights California	SB555 would establish guidelines to ensure that regional centers comply with intent of Lanterman Act in providing Individual Program Plans (IPPs) and Individualizes Family Service Plans (IFSP) that communicate with consumers and families in a culturally/linguistically competent manner.	Approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee. Awaits a vote by the full Senate.

*Karen Fessel*

Karen Fessel, Dr PH Executive Director & Founder Autism Health Insurance Project

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