



NEWSLETTERS

📍 [HOME](#) - [BLOG](#) - [NEWSLETTERS](#)

- [NOVEMBER 2011: HELP US HELP](#)

[FAMILIES WITH AUTISM](#)

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Category: Newsletters

Chances are, you're reading this letter because you have a child on the autism



spectrum or you work with this amazing population. Or, you may just be interested in helping someone who does. Autism is real -- It's just not fair. Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurological condition. The most recent data indicate that autism impacts 1 in 110 children, and the numbers are growing. Treatment of ASD is as real and as medically necessary as any other disorder typically covered by health insurance.

Despite national and state mental health parity laws requiring that insurers treat these conditions like any other medical condition, getting therapies covered is an uphill battle. I know. I spent years fighting the system to get my son desperately needed medical services, including speech, occupational, and behavioral therapies.

Families that are raising children on the autism spectrum are already stretched thin, just dealing with the emotional and behavioral challenges of this condition. They should not have to suffer the devastating costs of treatment, as well.



We can change all

that After years of successfully advocating to help my son, I founded the Autism Health Insurance Project so that I could help other families facing the same struggles. We are the only non-profit organization devoted to helping families get autism-related services through their health care plans. Since 2009, we have helped hundreds of families through our website, message boards, speaking engagements, and direct advocacy programs. We also spent untold hours and energy helping to get California's Autism Insurance Reform bill passed into law.



Seeing is believing

I have witnessed firsthand the relief on a mother's face when she hears that she does



not have to sell the family home so her toddler can begin receiving the intensive behavioral therapy that he needs. When children who lived exclusively in their own worlds get intensive therapy which allows them to start to emerge and connect with others. When children whom many thought would never speak start to talk. We make these miracles happen by helping families and providers get health insurance to pay for these medically necessary treatments.



How you can help

You can change the future for kids with autism by helping them get the health insurance benefits they need and deserve. Your contribution will help us: Teach parents how to advocate today for medically necessary treatments, so that tomorrow these children will lead happy, independent lives. Develop the tools and the training programs that will teach families how to work with their health plans to get services that their children so desperately need. Secure that behavioral interventions are included in the National Health Care Reform law. Advocate directly for families whose lives are too challenging and complex to advocate for themselves. Please give today. Your tax deductible contribution will make the difference. Go to our donate page and make a tax deductible contribution. Also, check out our website and facebook page, and see what we've been up to. Thank you for giving. Sincerely,

Karen Fessel

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

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