



# The Autism Society of Greater Cleveland

## First Word.....December, 2008

Greetings to all the membership and friends of the Autism Society of Greater Cleveland.

First, a warm word of thanks to Judith Saltzman, Atty. at Law. She was gracious enough to donate her time to discuss the new Ohio Department of Education Regulation Changes. This information was very beneficial to many of our members. We really appreciate the time she spent answering our questions.

For our December 2, 2008, meeting we will welcome a local school administrator. The topic of discussion will be the IEP process and Non-Violence Crisis Intervention. This will be a two part meeting that will address some very important issues for our members. **If you would like to use our free childcare, please RSVP at (216) 556-4937 or suport@asgc.org no later than November 27 in order to take advantage of this service.**

In January, we will host an informal parent support meeting. Parents will be encouraged to discuss among themselves topics that are important for their families. This will be a great way to start the new year.

AMC Entertainment & the ASA have teamed up to bring families affected by autism a special opportunity to enjoy their favorite films in a safe and accepting environment on a monthly basis. With Sensory Friendly Films, the movie auditoriums will have their lights brought up and the sound turned down. **Please join us Saturday, December 6, 2008, at 10:00 AM to view BOLT at AMC's Ridge Park Square, 4788 Ridge Road, Brooklyn Hts., OH 44144. Admission is reduced to \$4.25.**

**Please plan on joining us for our "2nd Annual ASGC Holiday Party" on December 13, 2008. (RSVP required).** We will host this party at St. Michaels Woodside Lower Hall (In Rear of bldg.), 5035 Mill Rd., Broadview Hts., OH 44147 - from Noon till 3:00 PM. Lunch is provided. In addition, each child/teen will receive a free gift. RSVP is required with ages and number of children attending. Please call (216) 556-4937 or e-mail holidayparty@asgc.org. Please Note: Parents must stay with their children. No child care will be provided at this event.

Again, thank you to all of our members, volunteers and board members who give so much of their time to help our organization grow.

*Eileen Hawkins—Administrator ASGC*

Eileen Hawkins—Administrator  
(216) 556-4937  
Monday—Friday 9AM– 4 PM

### Autism Society of Greater Cleveland

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**Jim McIlwee**  
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ASGC  
P.O. Box 41066  
Brecksville, Ohio 44141

The information in this newsletter is for educational purposes only. The Autism Society of Greater Cleveland does not endorse any specific product, method of therapy or organization. Our aim is to provide information that assists our membership in making educated decisions. Thank you.

## Action on Autism to Expect from the New Administration

Thursday, November 6, 2008

By: Carin Yavorcik

Obama outlines priorities in disability plan

On November 4, the United States of America elected Barack Obama as its 44th president. What will this mean for the autism community?

President-elect Obama and Vice President-elect Joe Biden promoted a comprehensive agenda to empower individuals with disabilities during their campaign.

In addition to reclaiming America's global leadership on this issue by becoming a signatory to—and having the Senate ratify—the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the plan has four parts, designed to provide lifelong supports and resources to Americans with disabilities. They are as follows:

First, provide Americans with disabilities with the *educational opportunities they need to succeed*. Obama and Biden said they would fight to provide students with disabilities the public education they have a right to, invest in early intervention programs, improve college opportunities and support universal screening of infants.

Second, *end discrimination and promote equal opportunity*. Obama and Biden plan to restore the Americans with Disabilities Act, reducing workplace and labor market discrimination against people with disabilities.

Third, *increase the employment rate* of workers with disabilities.

And fourth, *support independent, community-based living* for Americans with disabilities. Obama and Biden want to ensure that people with mental or functional disabilities are placed in community settings when appropriate.

Both Presidential candidates also wrote to the Autism Society of America and the National Health Council this past July for our town hall meeting on health care.

ASA continues to work with the President-elect on a myriad of issues, most recently drafting language to ensure that individuals with autism receive the treatments they need, promoting effective research into future treatments, and making sure these treatments are appropriately covered by insurance. (Article provided as a courtesy from the ASA.)



## ODMRDD Autism Interagency Workgroup releases plan - feedback needed!

In February, 2009 ODMRDD Director John Martin announced the formation of the Autism Interagency Workgroup (AIWG) at a phone conference with stakeholders. The purpose of the workgroup is to bring together members of the various Ohio state agencies - Health, Mental Health, Jobs and Family Services, Education, Rehab Services and MRDD - to work collaboratively to address the needs of persons with autism and their families in Ohio, using the Ohio Autism Taskforce recommendations as a guide and building on the work already done to make the recommendations a reality.



The AIWG has identified 6 Priorities :

- Statewide system of early identification of Autism.
- Evidence-based, high quality, cost effective intervention.
- Qualified professionals to serve.
- Support for caregivers and service providers.
- Effective service and support delivery through regional approaches.
- Successful transitions across lifespan.

The AIWG developed a work plan around the priorities, which Jody presented at the OAC meeting, and they are interested in your feedback! As an individual, family member, advocate, service provider or leader in the field, your input into the IWG work plan is critical and valued. Please review draft work plan, determine if the plan hits the mark for moving Ohio in the right direction, and provide feedback. You are also encouraged to share this plan with others that may be interested in providing their thoughts. All feedback will be shared with the Interagency Work Group and be used to finalize the work plan. Comments or feedback can be directed to [autism-feedback@odmrdd.state.oh.us](mailto:autism-feedback@odmrdd.state.oh.us). Should you have an interest in becoming involved with any of the specific activities outlined in the plan, please include your contact information.

To see the plan, and for complete information on the interagency workgroup, visit the ASA-ASO website, click on "Advocacy" then on "Interagency Workgroup".

**ASGC**  
Autism Society of Greater Cleveland

# Join the Autism Society of Greater Cleveland!

Dues for the Autism Society of Greater Cleveland are **only \$5.00** per year.

Checks for dues or donations can be sent to:

ASGC

P.O. Box 41066

Brecksville, Ohio 44141

(216) 556-4937

Check out our website at [www.asgc.org](http://www.asgc.org)!

**Join us for our Meetings December 2nd & January 6th.**

All are welcome to the monthly  
**ASGC Meeting**

When: 1st Tuesday of each month

Time: 6:30pm to 8:30 pm

Where: Cuyahoga Valley Career Center,  
8001 Brecksville Rd. in Brecksville, 44141

[support@asgc.org](mailto:support@asgc.org)

**Free Childcare is Available for ASGC Meetings**

**RSVP is Now a Mandatory Requirement for Free Childcare at least 7 days prior to meeting date.**

**(216) 556-4937**

*Childcare provided by the Staff from Monarch. Center for Autism*



## Upcoming Meetings

Meetings are held at 8001 Brecksville Rd., Brecksville, Ohio 44141

**December 2nd 6:30-8:30** Speaker will be a local school administrator

Topic: The IEP Process & Nonviolence Crises Intervention

**December 13 Noon to 3:00 PM** Holiday Party (Parents/Caregiver must stay with Child - - No Childcare)

**January 6th, 2009** Informal parent support group. Discuss important issues among other parents in an informal setting.

**Please join us!**

DIRECTIONS TO THE CUYAHOGA VALLEY CAREER CENTER

<http://www.asgc.org/events.htm>

# Asperger's Disorder - What is it?

## History

Asperger's Disorder was first described in the 1940s by Viennese pediatrician Hans Asperger who observed autistic-like behaviors and difficulties with social and communication skills in boys who had normal intelligence and language development. Many professionals felt Asperger's Disorder was simply a milder form of autism and used the term "high-functioning autism" to describe these individuals. Professor Uta Frith, with the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience of University College London and author of *Autism and Asperger Syndrome*, describes individuals with Asperger's Disorder as "having a dash of Autism." Asperger's Disorder was added to the *American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* in 1994 as a separate disorder from autism. However, there are still many professionals who consider Asperger's Disorder a less severe form of autism.

## Characteristics

What distinguishes Asperger's Disorder from Autism Disorder is the severity of the symptoms and the absence of language delays. Children with Asperger's Disorder may be only mildly affected and frequently have good language and cognitive skills. To the untrained observer, a child with Asperger's Disorder may just seem like a normal child behaving differently.

Children with autism are frequently seen as aloof and uninterested in others. This is not the case with Asperger's Disorder. Individuals with Asperger's Disorder usually want to fit in and have interaction with others; they simply don't know how to do it. They may be socially awkward, not understanding of conventional social rules, or show a lack of empathy. They may have limited eye contact, seem to be unengaged in a conversation, and not understand the use of gestures.

Interests in a particular subject may border on the obsessive. Children with Asperger's Disorder frequently like to collect categories of things, such as rocks or bottle caps. They may be proficient in knowing categories of information, such as baseball statistics or Latin names of flowers. While they may have good rote memory skills, they have difficulty with abstract concepts.

One of the major differences between Asperger's Disorder and autism is that, by definition, there is no speech delay in Asperger's. In fact, children with Asperger's Disorder frequently have good language skills; they simply use language in different ways. Speech patterns may be unusual, lack inflection or have a rhythmic nature, or it may be formal, but too loud or high pitched. Children with Asperger's Disorder may not understand the subtleties of language, such as irony and humor, or they may not understand the give-and-take nature of a conversation.

Another distinction between Asperger's Disorder and autism concerns cognitive ability. While some individuals with autism experience mental retardation, by definition a person with Asperger's Disorder cannot possess a "clinically significant" cognitive delay and most possess average to above average intelligence.

While motor difficulties are not a specific criteria for Asperger's, children with Asperger's Disorder frequently have motor skill delays and may appear clumsy or awkward.

## Diagnosis

Diagnosis of Asperger's Disorder is on the increase, although it is unclear whether it is more prevalent or whether more professionals are detecting it. The symptoms for Asperger's Disorder are the same as those listed for autism in the DSM-IV; however, children with AS do not have delays in the area of communication and language. In fact, to be diagnosed with Asperger's, a child must have normal language development as well as normal intelligence. The *DSM-IV* criteria for AS specifies that the individual must have "severe and sustained impairment in social interaction, and the development of restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests and activities that must cause clinically significant impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning."

The first step to diagnosis is an assessment, including a developmental history and observation. This should be done by medical professionals experienced with autism and other PDDs. If Asperger's Disorder or high-functioning autism is suspected, the diagnosis of autism will generally be ruled out first. Early diagnosis is also important as children with Asperger's Disorder who are diagnosed and treated early in life have an increased chance of being successful in school and eventually living independently.

*(Article provided as a courtesy from the ASA)*



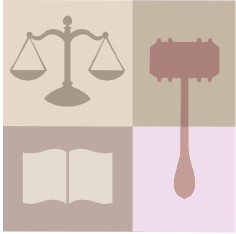
# Planning for the future...

A 1996 survey conducted by the ICR Survey Research Group showed that at least one individual in 20 percent of U.S. households is a caregiver - either part-time or full-time. Planning for the future of people with disabilities is something they and their families/caregivers must tackle - and the sooner the better.

Whether the person with special needs is 4 or 40 years old, it is imperative that families create a plan. Despite the growing number of persons with developmental disabilities in this country, less than 20 percent of families have done any planning.

Whether people with disabilities function entirely on their own or need assistance, a written directive can provide instruction for daily care, as well as unexpected and sudden contingencies. Family members/caregivers should discuss information regarding the needs and desires of people with disabilities and compose a directive document addressing lifestyle, financial, legal, and government benefit issues.

## The Planning Process



The planning process that financial planner Barton Stevens, ChLAP, recommends addresses four key issues affecting the life of the person with special needs. They are:

1. Lifestyle
2. Legal
3. Financial
4. Government Benefits

### Lifestyle

Lifestyle planning is where the family records what they want for the future of their loved one. This information is recorded in a document called the "Letter of Intent." Although not a legal document, it is as important as a Will and Special Needs Trust. Lifestyle issues require decisions regarding where the person will live, continued education programs, employment, social activities, religious affiliation, medical care, behavior management, advocacy and/or guardianship, trustees, and final arrangements.

In addition, detailed instructions are provided for assisting the person with the typical activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing, feeding, and toileting. Perhaps the person has a special way of communicating that only the immediate family knows and understands. It is important that this information be included. Rather than write hundreds or thousands of words describing how to do these things, it is recommended that families videotape them performing the activities of daily living and communicating in different social settings, such as the home, school, day care center, and so on.

Imagine how much easier and less traumatic it will be for the person with special needs and the care providers if they have detailed instructions immediately available to them rather than having to figure things out on their own. What could take weeks or months to adjust to could be shortened to a few days. The ultimate goal is to make the transition from parental care to independent living, residency in a group home, or moving in with other family members as easy as possible, bearing in mind the comfort and security of the person.

### Legal

Legal planning provides for the family to state their wishes as to the distribution of their assets and appointing executors to settle their estate. In conjunction with this, a trust is usually executed to provide professional money management (trustees, guardians), maintain government benefits, and protect the assets left for the individual.

The "Irrevocable" Special Needs Trust is the most commonly used document to provide supplemental funds for the exclusive benefit of the person with a disability. The assets are not in the name of the person, so they will not cause the loss of SSI (Supplemental Security Income) health care benefits. This Trust has proven invaluable to families regardless of the size of their estate or the amount of assets they are leaving.

### Financial

Financial planning is used to determine the supplemental needs of the person. First, a monthly budget is established based on today's needs while projecting for the future. Then, by using a reasonable rate of return on principal, the family identifies how much money is needed to fund the trust. In addition, the life expectancy of the person must be considered and then the need projected into the future using an inflation factor.

Once this is done, the family must now identify the resources to be used to fund the trust. They may include stocks, mutual funds, IRAs, 401(k)s, real estate, life insurance, etc. Professional management for investing the assets may be done by the Trustee, or the Trustee may hire advisors.

### Government Benefits

Government entitlements play a key role in the lives of many persons with special needs by providing cash and health care benefits under SSI (Supplemental Security Income), SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance), Medicaid, and Medicare. A basic understanding of federal and state entitlement programs is essential in order to be sure that the person gets all that they are qualified to receive and that assets received from family members through gifts, inheritance, and litigation do not result in the disqualification and termination of government benefits or the government claiming reimbursement for benefits provided from assets received by the person.

It should be clear that each of these issues is interrelated and should be coordinated in the planning process. Those persons who provide advice in one particular area should be made cognizant of what others are doing. This emphasizes the importance of an organized plan.

The result of a comprehensive plan should provide lifetime supervision and care; maintain government benefits; provide supplementary funds to help ensure a comfortable lifestyle; offer management of funds; provide dignified final arrangements; and avoid family conflict.

*(Article provided as a courtesy from the ASA)*

**Please Join us for our  
"2nd Annual ASGC  
Holiday Party"**



**Join  
us**

**WHEN: Saturday,  
December 13, 2008  
Noon till 3:00**

**WHERE: St. Michaels Woodside Party Ctr.  
(Lower Hall—Rear Entrance)**

**5035 Mill Road, Broadview Hts., OH 44147**

**RSVP: With # of Children & ages & # of Adults  
By December 5, 2008**

**(216) 556-4937 or holidayparty@asgc.org**



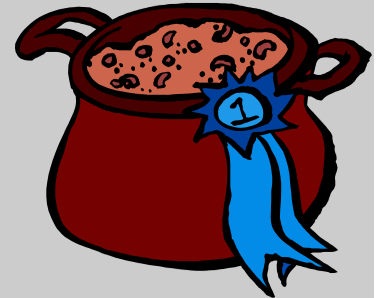
**Lunch provided along with a gift for each  
child/teen that attends.**

Free for ASGC members—Parent/caregiver must stay with child. No childcare provided.

**ASGC  
EVENTS**



**Save the  
Date...  
4th Annual  
ASGC  
Chili Cook-Off**



**April 2, 2009**

**6 to 9 PM**

**Terrace Club -  
Progressive Field**

**Tickets \$20.00**

**Accepting Donations!**

**For more information call  
(216) 556-4937 or e-mail  
@ support@asgc.org**



## Upcoming Ohio Budget of concern - ASA-ASO participates in Disability Budget Summit meetings

The first thing the 128th General Assembly will be working on come January will be the next Ohio Budget. The economic climate is pretty dismal in Ohio - so we are facing budget cuts. The ARC of Ohio has organized meetings of disability advocacy groups from around the state in an effort to develop a unified message for legislators regarding disability issues in the budget as they begin deliberations. The Disability Budget Coalition will be sending a letter as a group to the Governor listing priorities and concerns in mid-December. ASA-ASO will provide you with this information when it is available. If you are interested in working with us advocating with legislators regarding the budget, please see the article about the Ohio Autism Advocacy Network and join up! The following is a budget update prepared for ASA-ASO by Lisa Dodge of **Sean Dunn and Associates** - a Columbus based lobbying firms that works with ASA-ASO pro bono:

First and foremost, the FY 2010-2011 budget will be center stage from the start of the 128th General Assembly straight through June 30, 2009. It will dominate legislative attention and make it challenging to get legislators or the Administration to focus on anything else. All 3 speakers addressed the external pressures and revenue constraints and the OBM Policy Director highlighted stated areas of priority for Governor Strickland indicating the Governor will be "hypercritical of every line item and will invest in his priorities." Agencies have submitted their budget plans to OBM assuming between 5% and 10% reductions. It was stated that some agencies or line items could face in excess of a 5-10% reduction. (Bear in mind the Governor imposed two budget cuts already in February and September of this fiscal year of \$733 million and \$540 million respectively. Many believe another cut is imminent before the end of FY 09.)

The 2010-2011 Operating Budget should be introduced around February 4, 2009. It is believed the 2010/2011 Operating Budget will have the same real dollar amounts as the FY 2004/2005 Operating Budget. (In terms of GRF expenditures, this totaled \$48.78 Billion for the 2004-2005 biennium.)

External Pressures and Revenue Constraints Impacting the 2010-2011 Operating Budget

- Primary/Secondary Education – Governor Strickland will be submitting his proposal either via the Operating Budget, Constitutional Amendment or by freestanding bill. His proposal could include any of the following: (1) commitments of the General Revenue Fund (GRF); (2) an expansion of gaming; and/or (3) a tax increase.
- Higher Education – Governor and General Assembly committed historic financial support to higher education in the 2008-2009 Operating Budget (\$300 million over the biennium to help offset the 2-year tuition freeze) and have indicated they will maintain a level of commitment to higher education in the upcoming budget.
- Tax Reform – FY 2010 is the last year of the tax break phase in. In addition to foregone revenue, there is also a local government payment which is equal to \$2 billion/year.
- DYS Consent Decree which requires operational fixes in FY 2009 to the tune of \$20-\$25 million. This will likely result in a supplemental appropriations bill before June 30, 2009.
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) – Ohio has been overspending TANF to the tune of \$200 million – some will suggest offsetting this with GRF.
- Unemployment Insurance – must ensure the fund remains solvent - challenge is do you increase what employers pay or decrease what employees get – if we borrow money from feds the interest will have to be paid with GRF.
- Commercial Activities Tax (CAT) – ongoing battle with the Grocers who argue the CAT is an excise tax – if court rules in their favor and includes a "look back" period the price tag could be as high as \$400-500 million.
- Diesel and Contractors – should tax go to GRF or to the Highway Fund? This could cost the state GRF \$120 million/year.
- HB 95 included a provision to tax satellite but not cable – satellite companies have gone to court – should the court rule in their favor, this could cost the state \$88 million/year.
- DRC Incarceration rate is at an all time high (approximately 51,000) and continues to grow. This will continue to be a drain on the operating budget as Public Safety and Protection is the 4th highest consumer of GRF appropriations in the Operating Budget trailing only Primary and Secondary Education, Higher Education, and Medicaid.

Governor Strickland's stated priorities:

1. Education Reform for K-12
2. Access to Healthcare
3. Jobs and Economic Development

(Article provided as a courtesy from the ASA)



## Special Education Discipline— Tools for Today and Tomorrow

Many children with disabilities have inappropriate behaviors that are part of their disability. IDEA provides protection for any child who is subject to discipline and who is eligible for special education. During the first hour of this workshop, Franklin J. Hickman, JD, Hickman & Lowder Co LPA, will cover circumstances and reasons a school district can suspend or expel a student with disabilities, procedures that must be followed, and limitations for special education students. During the second hour, Barbara Rutt, Information Specialist, Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD), will talk about the functional behavioral assessment, who is involved, what it looks like, and how to put it into the IEP.

Date: December 10, 2008

Check in: 6:15-6:30 pm

Time: 6:30-8:30 pm

Location: Achievement Centers for Children, 24211 Center Ridge Road, Westlake 44145

Cost: \$10.00

Advance Registration is Required: Please call Linda Kresnye at 216-229-5757, Ext. 126 Please forward this information to anyone who may benefit from attending. Thank you. Our thanks to the Nord Family Foundation for financial support of this workshop.

Tools for Today and Tomorrow workshops are designed for parents and caregivers. Professionals are also welcome to attend. Information provided is for educational purposes only and is not intended to provide professional advice or guidance for individual issues. For individual issues, consult with a qualified professional of your choice.

## Help Wanted

The Family Child Learning Center is seeking a full-time teacher for their research preschool program for children with autism. This person must hold a master's degree in Special Education or a related field and will be responsible for providing classroom and home-based intervention services for children with ASD as well as typical peers. Experience in developmentally appropriate early childhood practices, best practices for children with special needs, and supervision of university students preferred.

For consideration please send resume to Abbie McCauley, Family Child Learning Center, 143 Northwest Ave., Bldg. A., Tallmadge, OH 44278, [awheeden@kent.edu](mailto:awheeden@kent.edu)

P. O. Box 41066  
Brecksville, Ohio 44141  
Office Hours Mon-Friday 9:00 AM-4:00 PM  
**Phone: 216-556-4937**  
**Email: support@asgc.org**

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## Autism Conferences, Courses, Events, Opportunities

### Openings Available...

JAF's Therapy in Motion, Inc. Therapeutic & Educational Horse Back Riding. JAF's Therapy in Motion, Inc., is a therapeutic and educational riding program located in Lafayette Township, just south of Medina on Route 42.

The program provides a wide range of services tailored to suit children and teens with special needs.

For more information, contact Judy Fox at (330) 722-2415 or [jafsfarm@aol.com](mailto:jafsfarm@aol.com)

### Career & Employment Development Strategies for Individuals with Autism

March 6, 2009

Oct. 22, 2009

CCF Autism Workshops

Cost: \$150

This workshop will address various aspects of career preparation and job placement for individuals with ASD

Call (216) 448-6440 or [szabol@ccf.org](mailto:szabol@ccf.org). Register early

### Teaching Play & Leisure Activities to Students with ASD's

March 13, 2009

Nov. 12, 2009

CCF Autism Workshops

Cost \$150

This one day workshop is designed to provide strategies for parents and professionals to utilize when teaching children of all ages to acquire appropriate play/leisure skills

For more information call (216) 448-6440 .

Do you have some news or information to share?

Send information by email to [Hawkins\\_eileen@hotmail.com](mailto:Hawkins_eileen@hotmail.com) by the 1st of each month. for the following month's letter. We will share information, provided that space is available. Thank you!