

To: The Executive Committee of the Louisiana Academy of Pediatrics

From: Dr. Thiravat Choojitarom, M.D. FAAP, CATCH Facilitator to Louisiana

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Report of the Autism Implementation Committee

The committee concluded its final meeting on Wednesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009. As you know, the purpose of the group was to implement Act 648, commonly called the Autism Bill mandating autism coverage in Louisiana. The group was composed to members of Insurance carriers, ABA (Applied Behavioral Analysis) therapist, Advocates, a member of Autism Speaks, and me.

I am pleased to report that over the past year we have seen the acceptance of ABA therapists and ABA therapy by the majority of the insurance community. In addition, a number of ABA therapists have come on board in pursuing credentialing and reimbursement through the Insurance companies. Currently, all but one Insurance providers have credentialed ABA therapists. Almost all Insurance providers have paid for ABA services and 10 of 12 Insurers have paid for line therapists (the one that actually do the therapy but are not ABA certified). The committee feels that this is a good start and indicative of a positive trend in broadening ABA availability.

The committee's recommendations include: the continued education of the parents and therapists to the process of credentialing and reimbursement through such agencies as the Developmental Disabilities Council, Louisiana Association for Behavior Analysis ([www.mcneese.edu/louaba](http://www.mcneese.edu/louaba)), and Families Helping Families. We will also continue to inform Insurance Providers about the law and its requirements. Act 648 requires that all businesses of greater than 50 employees doing business in Louisiana provide coverage for autism; coverage depends on where the covered person resides, not where the health insurance company or the company itself is located. Therefore, if you live in Louisiana, but your company's health insurance is in New York, they must cover autism. The Louisiana Department of Insurance has been very active in making sure this message is communicated.

Lastly, we were asked to determine if follow up legislation may be needed to the law as written. As yet, we have no recommendations to amend the law. There will continue to be ongoing discussions prior to the Legislative session in March 2010.

The academy's standpoint should be to provide education and resources to screen for and diagnose autism spectrum disorder, and encourage our members to advocate for their patients with their insurance carriers and lawmakers.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at [THI10300@OLOLRMC.COM](mailto:THI10300@OLOLRMC.COM).

Respectfully Submitted,

Thiravat Choojitarom