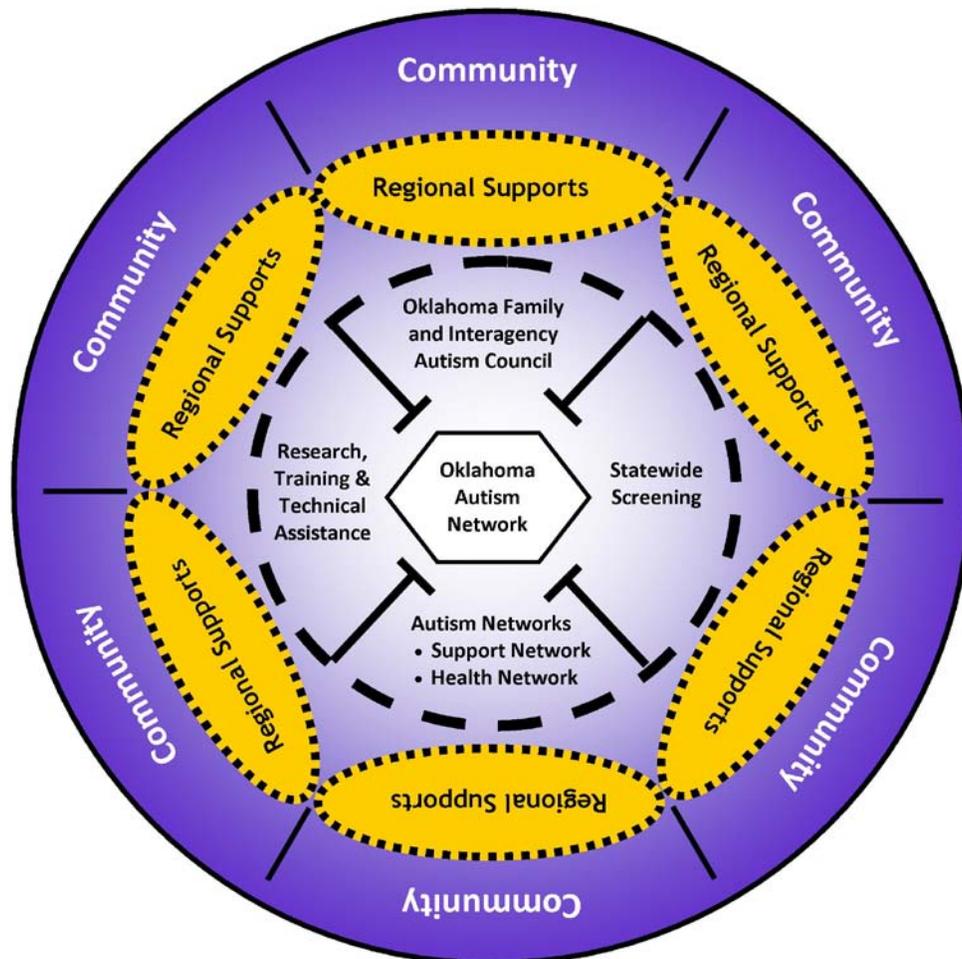


Individuals with Autism and Their Families

Oklahoma Plan

Progress Report - May 2009



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Introduction

DHS Director Howard Hendrick brought together stakeholders “**to discuss the development of a comprehensive plan that would move the state to the cutting edge of research, service delivery and supports for people with autism of all ages in the state of Oklahoma.**” The Autism Working Group was convened by the Lee Mitchener Tolbert Center for Developmental Disabilities (Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, College of Allied Health, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center) and the Developmental Disabilities Services Division of Oklahoma Department of Human Services. Participants included representatives of the primary agencies and providers serving people with autism in Oklahoma, representatives of higher education and parents of people with autism.

The Autism Working Group began meeting on Tuesday April 10, 2001, holding ten large group half-day working meetings during 2001. The meetings were dedicated primarily to hearing from people and professionals around the state with information, expertise or experience with people with autism who were asked to provide specific information and data to the Working Group. The Autism Working Group collected additional data from families of people with autism through surveys. A public listening conference was held to receive further input from families. The Working Group organized itself into small task-oriented planning teams and held numerous meetings to develop the strategies necessary for the comprehensive plan. The *Oklahoma Plan for Individuals with Autism and Their Families* (hereinafter referred to as the *Oklahoma Plan*) was the final product of the Autism Working Group and was finalized in 2002. The *Oklahoma Plan* outlined key findings, a vision for Oklahomans with autism and their families and key recommendations.

Autism Spectrum Disorders

Autism Spectrum Disorders are a group of complex neurologically based disorders characterized by impairments in three core areas including social interaction, communication, and repetitive and limited interests or behaviors. While for some children symptoms may appear in infancy, most children are not diagnosed until later. Autism is a spectrum disorder with impairments ranging from mild to severe.

Over the past five years the prevalence of autism has risen significantly. The Centers for Disease Control reported a prevalence of 1 in 150 in 2007 with the prevalence as high as 1 in 94 for boys. Research indicates that there are likely multiple causes for autism, including genetic influences, vulnerability to toxins, exposure to neurotoxins, and autoimmune disorders. There is currently no cure for autism; however with appropriate intervention children are able to make significant progress.

Due to the increased prevalence autism has received significant national attention over the past several years. In 2006, President Bush signed the Combating Autism Act that authorized nearly \$1 billion over five years to combat autism spectrum disorders, including autism Aspergers syndrome, Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified. The Act calls for improved screening, early intervention, education, and research related to the causes and treatments for autism.

Update on Autism in Oklahoma

The Oklahoma Autism Network (hereafter referred to as OAN) began in October of 2003 with funding from Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services Division as the first step towards implementing the *Oklahoma Plan*. During the first year the OAN was a virtual network with the primary goal of developing a website as a central place for parents and professionals to access information regarding autism and resources available in Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Autism Network has expanded over the past five years to provide a variety of supports and services. Some of these include a toll-free phone line, oversight of the Autism Pilot Program, training and technical assistance to parents, caregivers, and professionals, and collaboration with various agencies and professionals working towards continued improvement of systems of services and supports for individuals with autism and their families. This progress report provides details of activities that have occurred in Oklahoma since development of the original *Oklahoma Plan*.

Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorders in Oklahoma

In 2002 when the original Oklahoma Plan was developed the prevalence rate of autism was 1 in 500 individuals. In 2007 the Centers for Disease Control estimated that the prevalence of autism had increased to 1 in 150 8 year olds. In October of 2008 the number of children age 3 – 21 receiving special education services under the category of autism was 2,297. This is an increase from 1,182 children in December of 2004. We do not currently have a mechanism for tracking all individuals in Oklahoma with an autism spectrum disorder.

Legislation in Oklahoma

2008 Oklahoma legislative session

- Governor Henry signed SB 2071 and included two components:
 1. Autism Training and Awareness for General Education teachers and administrative staff passed and "requires all general education teachers and education support professionals of students in early childhood programs through grade three to complete training in the area of autism at least once per year."
 2. Development of a Board Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA) Curriculum and Therapist Development program at the University of Central Oklahoma. The program began in fall of 2008 and currently has approximately 27 students enrolled.
- Nick's Law, an insurance equity act that requires insurance companies to cover autism related services passed the Senate but not the House of Representatives.

During the fall of 2008 several interim studies were conducted by the legislature with the purpose of gaining more information about autism and the needs of individuals with autism and

their families. A ‘whitepaper’ was also developed by a group of key stakeholders that included family members, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services - Developmental Disabilities Services Division, the Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council, the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, the Oklahoma State Department of Education – Special Education Services, and the Oklahoma Autism Network. The purpose of the whitepaper was to provide an overview of programs and proposed options for expanding the services and supports available to individuals with ASD in Oklahoma.

2009 Oklahoma legislative session

- Governor Henry signed SB 135, a bill designed to increase the services available to individuals with ASD in Oklahoma. The bill provides a state licensing process for national board certified behavior analysts, a behavior therapy pilot program, training for physicians to diagnose and treat autism, and replication of a program like Early Foundations.
- HB 1312, otherwise known as Nick’s Law was heard in the House Economic Development Committee in February 2009. The measure was not passed and due to House rules HB 1312 or similar legislation can not be introduced in the House for two years.

Key Findings of the 2002 Oklahoma Plan

1. The numbers and rates of people identified as having autism in Oklahoma are increasing.
2. Early diagnosis and treatment are essential to effective care and treatment of people with autism.
3. People with autism encompass diverse populations for whom no single model program can be described as the most appropriate.
4. The Autism Working Group did not agree that a single, residential site for people with autism is needed or beneficial.
5. The various Oklahoma programs and agencies involved in providing services and support related to autism are not well coordinated and do not offer a seamless continuum over a person's lifetime.
6. Oklahoma lacks sufficient, effective training and technical assistance for caregivers, service providers and programs serving people with autism.
7. People with autism encounter difficulties as a result of insufficient understanding of the associated behaviors by the general public.
8. People with autism encounter difficulties as a result of insufficient understanding of the associated behaviors among general service providers and emergency responders.
9. Sufficient programs and services, including transition services, are not available in Oklahoma to adults (age 18 and over) with autism, especially those enabling each person to achieve his or her full potential as an adult and to be safe during a crisis.
10. Families represent a significant resource for people with autism.

Vision for Oklahomans with Autism and Their Families

Beginning at the first meeting and continuing until the end, the Working Group used the information it received and its own valuable experiences to craft a vision for Oklahoma's system of services and supports. Refined continually throughout the process, the vision provides a comprehensive statement of the beliefs, dreams and goals of the Working Group for people in Oklahoma with autism.

- Oklahoma has a system of support for people with autism or other autism spectrum disorders (Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified, Asperger's Syndrome, Rett's Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder) and their families in which each individual's strengths and needs are identified early and provide the basis for his or her specific plan of care, education, services, employment and residence. The personal preferences and values of individuals with autism and their families are respected and reflected in the development and implementation of each person's plan.
- In Oklahoma all people with autism are safe and none are denied services. A seamless continuum of effective, integrated options for assistance, including crisis intervention, is available for every person across his or her life span. Oklahoma's full range of flexibly-funded options includes high quality, effective education, care and support reflecting the current and continually updated "best practices" for people with autism.
- Each person with autism resides in the least restrictive setting capable of providing that individual with consistent safety, security and maximum independence. Ideally, a person with autism lives in his or her own home in an Oklahoma town, city or rural area.
- Oklahoma health care providers understand these disorders and provide cutting-edge care through community-based services which provide each person a regular place to receive continuing care that meets his or her individual needs.
- People with autism or autism spectrum disorders have access to the full range of employment and day services, including supported employment, enabling each person to achieve his or her potential. People with autism and their families are fully accepted and actively participate in their community, interacting effectively with their friends, neighbors and local service providers. People with autism expand their opportunities through interactive Internet access.
- All professionals working with people with autism are competent, educated to provide contemporary and effective services and receive ongoing professional development which is based on the most up-to-date evidence-based information. Families and relative caregivers are provided effective support, training and technical assistance, enabling them to ensure the best care possible for their loved one. Every person with autism receives an appropriate, individualized education which assures that he or she masters functional skills and achieves his or her potential. The general public understands autism (particularly emergency responders), complementing professional and family endeavors to ensure appropriate treatment of any person.

- Families and service providers are well supported with timely and easy access to resources and services. Safe and time-effective substitute care is available for all ages, enabling care givers to receive effective respite when needed and people with autism to be stabilized during a crisis.
- Oklahoma’s system of care for people with autism and their families is accountable, with its effectiveness regularly measured and reported through the outcomes achieved. Monitoring, oversight and grievance procedures are effective and involve family members.
- Oklahoma leads the nation in its research to identify the causes of autism and document the effectiveness of “best practices” designed to provide support, care and education for individuals and their families.

Level 1: Oklahoma System of Excellence

Statewide Administrative Autism Unit

Establish a statewide unit to facilitate the planning, financing and administration of the various recommendations herein.

Recommendation: The working group identified the need to establish a statewide unit to facilitate the planning, financing and administration of the various recommendations of the *Oklahoma Plan*. Recommendations were for the Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services Division (hereinafter referred to as OKDHS-DDSD) and the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Services (hereinafter referred to as OSDE-SES) to serve as shared lead agencies and fund the statewide administrative autism unit. Additional funding opportunities identified include using federal grant funds from the Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council (hereinafter referred to as “DD Council”) and Medicaid reimbursement for administrative expenses.

Update: The Oklahoma Autism Network (hereinafter referred to as OAN) was established in October 2003 as a statewide unit to facilitate the planning, financing and administration of the various recommendations of the *Oklahoma Plan*. The Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services Division has funded OAN from fiscal year (FY) 2003-2004 to the present FY 2008-2009. The Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Services provided funding mid FY 2007-2008 for parent training and professional development and additional funding for new staff FY 2008-2009.

Outcome: Efforts continue

Statewide Interagency and Family Coordination Team

Create (or enhance/coordinate) an ongoing interagency and family team to ensure that existing services for individuals with autism and their families function as or are expanded into a seamless continuum of effective, integrated options with common criteria.

Recommendation: The working group outlined criteria for services, identified membership for the team, and recommended the use of interagency agreement to secure commitment of participating agencies.

Update: Several workgroups have been established and have contributed to the expansion of services and supports including: AUCD Act Early Summit Team, Be Ready for Life Model Secondary Transition Team, Oklahoma Autism Alliance, Oklahoma City Professional Autism Coalition, Oklahoma Family Center for Autism, Oklahoma Health Care Authority Autism Work Group, SoonerStart Early Intervention Interagency Coordination Council (ICC) subcommittee on Low-Incidence Disabilities / Autism, and the Tulsa Professional Autism Network (see appendix

A for details regarding each of these groups). These workgroups have accomplished many important activities, and on May 19, 2009, representatives from these groups and other key stakeholders will participate in the Oklahoma Family and Interagency Autism Council inaugural meeting for the purposes of:

- Facilitating the efficient and effective exchange of information on ASD activities among state agencies, professionals, and families;
- Coordinating ASE-related activities within the state for individuals across the ASD spectrum and across the lifespan;
- Increasing public understanding of the member agencies' activities, programs, policies, and research related to ASD;
- Providing input to annual updates of the Individuals with Autism and Their Families Oklahoma Plan; and
- Providing an opportunity for those invested in Oklahomans with autism and their families to network and build relationships that foster collaboration between agencies, organizations, and family members.

Outcome: Efforts continue

Statewide Screening

Develop and coordinate statewide screening programs for individuals age 12 months or older.

Recommendation: The working group recommended that a standard screening protocol capable of effectively identifying possible autism based on the definitions included in the Diagnosis and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) be identified and implemented statewide. This includes providing training to existing screening programs and other key providers about the screening protocol for autism, coordinating with existing screening programs to ensure ongoing screening in various regional and community-based locations at no cost for individuals age 12 months or older, and providing immediate follow-up and referral, as necessary, for those identified through screening for diagnosis, parent support groups, services and programs, and linking the family with the Autism Network for ongoing assistance, referral, and follow-up.

Update:

- In 2003, OAN was established as the state's autism information and referral system providing information about screening, diagnosis, services and programs, parent-led organizations, and training and technical assistance opportunities.

- In 2004, the Checklist for Autism in Toddlers with Denver modification was identified as a screening tool to be used for SoonerStart Early Intervention for children in the program suspected of having autism.
- From fall 2004 through spring 2007, 20 self-selected SoonerStart early intervention providers completed the Statewide Training and Regional Support (STARS) Level II Challenging Behavior training, screening component for the Checklist for Autism in Toddlers, Denver modification with Doug Scambler, PhD (psychologist). The screening component included demonstrating reliability in use of the tool.
- In August of 2005 Doug Scambler, PhD and Beth DeGrace, PhD presented a request for a feasibility review by the ICC Policy and Funding Subcommittee on Low-Incidence Disabilities and Autism regarding a research study examining the effectiveness and efficiency of four different methods of screening children in the SoonerStart early intervention program for autism spectrum disorders and to understand how families experience the screening and diagnostic process. The subcommittee recommended that Dr. Scambler and Dr. DeGrace present to the ICC. The ICC approved the review contingent upon attaining external funding to conduct the study. Dr. Scambler and Dr. DeGrace applied for an OCAST grant that was approved but unfunded. They also applied for a NIMH grant.
- In 2006, The Oklahoma Autism Network and Tulsa Autism Foundation presented the First Signs Program at Grand Rounds to pediatricians in Tulsa. The First Signs Program has been distributed to 50 physicians in the Tulsa area by the Tulsa Autism Foundation.
- In April 2006, the Oklahoma Autism Network participated in the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Learn the Signs Act Early campaign and distributed 50 kits to physicians in Oklahoma.
- In March 2008, the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) coordinated the Act Early Summit Project. Oklahoma sent a team to the first regional summit in Albuquerque, NM. The state team is developing a plan to enhance statewide early identification, screening, and diagnosis for ASD.
- Oklahoma Key to Improving Developmental and Behavioral Services (OK-KIDS) was one of 5 state recipients to receive a \$10,000 grant. OK-KIDS will use these funds to support a portion of salary for a Practice Enhancement Assistant ("PEA") who will help 5 primary care practices in Canadian County improve the quantity and quality of developmental screening. OK-KIDS has allotted a portion of the funds to cover the cost of providing an Ages and Stages Questionnaire developmental screening instrument to each of the 5 practices.
- Dr. Lara McGuinn, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Child Study Center received an Association of University Centers on Developmental Disabilities (AUCD) Centers for Disease Control grant to increase the capacity of family practice physicians to establish a protocol for screening for autism and other developmental disabilities. The grant will focus on physicians in Canadian County and possibly Garfield County.

- In 2008, the Interagency Coordinating Council Subcommittee on Low-Incidence Disabilities and Autism outlined a process for use of the M-CHAT and the follow-up interview for screening all children between the ages of 18 months and 30 months at the time of initial evaluation and those already in the SoonerStart program. Children between 30 and 36 months of age will be screened if a parent or provider has a concern about autism. On November 1, 2008 SoonerStart implemented the recommendations.
- In 2009 Jennifer Moyano, registered and licensed occupational therapist with the OAN, completed reliability on the STAT screening tool with Wendy Stone, PhD at Vanderbilt University. She will train and complete reliability with SoonerStart early intervention providers during 2009.
- In 2009, the OAN will offer training related to use of autism specific screening tools such as the CHAT with Denver modifications, M-CHAT, and STAT.
- In 2009, the OAN collaborated with the Irwin H. Brown Office of Continuing Medical Education at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center to offer training for physicians in Oklahoma regarding the early signs of autism, screening, early intervention and school services, and medical management as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Dr. Paul Carbone from the University of Utah was a keynote speaker at the annual Primary Care Conference in Oklahoma City in May 2009. The presentation will be available until 2012 as a web-based training for continuing medical education credit.

Outcome: Efforts continue in this area with an emphasis on information dissemination and training for physicians, nurses, childcare providers, early intervention, and other professionals working with young children.

Autism Networks

Create an “Autism Support Network” to function as a family-oriented system for referral, coordination and family support across the lifespan.

Recommendation: The working group recommended participation in the Autism Support Network be voluntary and include participation of people with autism and their families, including adults and children across the autism spectrum, regardless of severity of need or financial status. Children less than five years of age without a diagnosis but who have characteristics of autism and are actively seeking a diagnosis may also access support from the Network. The primary functions of the Network are to 1) develop and implement a system for ongoing monitoring of the needs of people with autism over time, 2) alert agencies to the changing needs of specific individuals or groups, 3) ensure that families are aware of and connected to screening and diagnosis resources, 4) ensure that from the time of diagnosis families are aware of and connected to quality help within an acceptable radius of their community, including but not limited to support groups, the “Oklahoma Autism Health Network” and other available resources, 5) facilitate involvement of families and consumers in the development of overarching principles for training and services, competencies for specific disciplines, training content and curricula, 6) facilitate the involvement of families and consumers in the continuous monitoring for best practices in services for people with autism, 7) assist family to locate quality services and supports, and 8) initiate a 4-STAR rating to highlight expertise in autism (similar to the child-care rating system) that is applicable to either staff or agency, increases the reimbursement rates tied to a STAR-program, includes a consumer and family team in rating evaluation, and is based on best practice analysis, training levels, supervision and experience in direct care.

The working group recommended DHS-DDSD and OSDE-SES as the shared lead agencies. Additional funding and participation should occur through interagency agreements that commit funding, participation, and other support from the relevant departments and agencies. The recommended agencies include DHS-DDSD, OSDE-SES, DRS, OSDH, DHS-Aging, DHS-Child Care, OCCY, Tolbert Center, Child Study Center, McCarty Center, Center for Interdisciplinary Learning and Leadership, OASIS, OHCA, DMHSAS-CMHI, DMHSAS-CMHC. The interagency funding package should be designed to maximize the use of federal financial participation (hereinafter referred to as “FFP”) as appropriate with subcontract responsibilities to a consumer-responsive entity.

Update: The functions of an ‘Autism Support Network’ as described above are currently accomplished through the activities of several agencies/organizations in Oklahoma. These organizations provide support to individuals with autism and their families across Oklahoma. While significant progress has been made there continue to be needs for expanding access to information and resources, particularly in rural areas of the state. See appendix A for a description of Oklahoma autism supports and services.

Comments: Implementation of a 4-STAR rating system for providers is difficult at this time. Implementation would require restructuring the current reimbursement system through publicly funded programs, primarily Medicaid and Developmental Disabilities Services through DHS-

DDSD. It is difficult for the limited number of providers who specialize in autism to meet the needs of the growing number of children and adults with ASD, and placing additional expectations or requirements beyond licensure and professional standards of practice on those providers could result in fewer providers to meet the growing needs.

A need exists for a formal mechanism of monitoring on-going needs of people with autism over time, formalized means to “alert agencies to the changing needs of specific individuals or groups,” development of “overarching principles for training and services, competencies for specific disciplines, training content and curricula,” and “continuous monitoring for best practices”.

Outcome: Efforts continue with needs for funding, participation and other supports from relevant departments and agencies.

Create an “Oklahoma Autism Health Network” of providers recognized for a significant level of expertise in providing health, medical or educational services to people with autism..

Recommendation: The working group recommended that providers included in the health network include (but not be limited to) physicians (pediatricians, family medicine, geriatricians, psychiatrists), dentists, allied health professionals (physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, nutritionists), psychologists, nurses, and pharmacists. The scope of health care services that are provided should include (but not be limited to) early diagnosis, emphasis on behavioral intervention strategies, primary care, sensori-motor processing and skills, disease prevention, avoidance of medical complications. Members of the health network should have access to ongoing education, training, and technical assistance. The working group recommended that providers working in publicly funded programs assume the responsibility for knowing and applying the most current information for the benefit of their clients with developmental disabilities, including autism.

Update:

- Currently two autism specific professional networks exist with the purpose of providing evidence-based information, sharing local resources and networking opportunities for publicly and private funded professionals. The OAN coordinates the Oklahoma City Professional Autism Coalition that meets quarterly and includes professionals in the Oklahoma City metro area. The Tulsa Professional Autism Network meets quarterly and includes professionals in the Tulsa metro area. Both professional groups currently include physicians, psychologists, related services providers, and behavioral therapists.
- Professionals have access to didactic and competency-based training and technical assistance specific to autism through the OAN (for parents, educator, and providers serving individuals across the lifespan), Early Foundations (for parents and professionals serving children from time of diagnosis or suspected autism to 4 years), STARS (for parents, educators, and providers serving individuals across the lifespan), Project Peak

(for educators serving students 3 to 21 years), and Teacher Registry (for educators serving students 3 to 21 years).

- Aaron's Bridge, a 501c3 non-profit organization was developed in 2007 by Keith and Joni Geary. The mission for Aaron's Bridge is to facilitate access to more treatment options in Oklahoma for children with developmental disabilities, including Autism Spectrum Disorder. Aaron's Bridge has sponsored several presentations on biomedical intervention and is collaborating with the Autism Research Institute for a mini-Defeat Autism Now conference scheduled for June 2009.
- The OAN collaborated with the Irwin H. Brown Office of Continuing Medical Education at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center to offer training for physicians in Oklahoma regarding the early signs of autism, screening, early intervention and school services, and medical management as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Dr. Paul Carbone from the University of Utah was a keynote speaker at the annual Primary Care Conference in Oklahoma City in May 2009. The presentation will be available until 2012 as a web-based training for continuing medical education credit.
- The 1st annual conference on autism spectrum disorder is scheduled for November 2009 and will offer three training tracks including medical, education, and advocacy for parents and professionals.

Outcome: Efforts continue with an emphasis on expanding the number of providers, particularly in rural areas and also expanding the breadth and depth of training available to professionals throughout the state. Training is most successful when it includes follow-up technical assistance.

Research, Training and Technical Assistance

Develop an inter-disciplinary research center to conduct investigations into the cause, diagnosis, early detection, prevention and treatment of autism in Oklahoma.

Comment: The working group recommended development of an inter-disciplinary research center to conduct investigations into the cause, diagnosis, early detection, prevention and treatment of autism in Oklahoma. The Child Study Center or the Tolbert Center were identified to identify current research locations in Oklahoma and to take the lead in creating interdisciplinary partnerships among institutions of higher learning to develop a program to facilitate collaboration among researchers interested in autism. The OUHSC through the Child Study Center or Tolbert Center should submit interdisciplinary grant applications to secure funding for autism related research.

Update:

University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, College of Allied Health, Department of Rehabilitation Science, Tolbert Center for Developmental Disabilities

Grant Submitted

- 2008 Getting an Early Start: Early Intervention Services for Toddlers with Autism, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Special Education Research, (\$750,000).

Grants Funded

- 2008 Web-based Preparation of Occupational and Physical Therapists to Provide Early Intervention and Related Services, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (\$799,900)
- 2007 Preparation of Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists to Provide Early Intervention and Related Services, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (\$782,202).
- 2005 Families of Children with Severe Autism: Ways of Living and Coping, University of Oklahoma College of Allied Health (\$6,896).
- 2002 Service Provision for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Early Intervention, University of Oklahoma College of Allied Health (\$4,293).
- 2002 Preparation of Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists to Provide Early Intervention and Related Services for Children with Low Incidence Disabilities, a 5-year personnel preparation grant, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (\$1,482,780).

Grants Approved Not Funded

- 2006 Preparation of Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists to Provide Early Intervention and Related Services, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (\$782,202).
- 2006 A Comparison Study of Screening for Autism Spectrum Disorders in Early Childhood, Oklahoma Center for the Advancement in Science and Technology, (\$150,000).

Grants Not Funded

- 2008 Family Health Program: A Pilot Study, Autism Speaks, (\$200,000).
- 2007 Getting an Early Start: Early Intervention Services for Toddlers with Autism, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Special Education Research, (\$1,499,361.00).
- 2007 A Conceptual Model of Family Experiences and Health Following the Diagnosis of Autism, Presbyterian Health Foundation (\$21,079).
- 2006 Nurturing Caregiver-Infant Competence in the Home: The First 9 Months, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (\$1,581,414).
- 2006 Preparation of Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists for Leadership Roles in Early Intervention and Related Services, U.S. Department of Education (\$799,954).
- 2006 A Comparison Study of Screening for Autism Spectrum Disorders in Early Childhood R03, National Institute of Mental Health, Research on Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorders (\$100,000).
- 2004 Families of Children with Severe Autism: The Process and Experiences of Making Treatment Decisions, Presbyterian Health Foundation (\$18,685).

University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, College of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, Child Study Center

Grants Not Funded

- 2008 State Implementation Grant for Improving Services for Children and Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other Developmental Disabilities, US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration
- 2008 LEND Expansion Grant for Children and Youth with ASD, US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration

Outcome: Efforts continue

Develop a comprehensive system for training and technical assistance to disseminate evidence-based knowledge and practices in autism.

Comment: The working group recommended developing a list of relevant professions to receive pre-service and in-service training and education, including medical providers, educators, allied health professionals, day care providers, counselors and social workers, lawyers, higher education, job coaches, HTS, emergency responders (911 personnel, police, firefighters, EMTs, etc). Recommendations were also made for development of overarching principles, core competencies, and values for all pre-service and in-service training and technical assistance. The Center for Learning and Leadership, Tolbert Center and Child Study Center should work with faculty and family members to collect and house data relevant to evidence-based knowledge and practice in autism.

Update: Training specific to supporting children and adults with ASD is occurring through several organizations in Oklahoma. These organizations include but are not limited to:

- Aaron's Bridge
- Autism Center of Tulsa
- Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services Division
- Early Foundation: Autism Model and Outreach Project
- Oklahoma Autism Network
- Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Services
- Project PEAK
- Statewide Training and Regional Supports (STARS)
- Teacher Registry Project

Outcome: Efforts continue.

Level 2: Regional Hubs

Regional Hubs

Phase in a system of six staffed regional HUBS to house and coordinate tiered crisis intervention, model project demonstrations and research, information and referral to local services, and training / technical assistance for families and providers.

Comment: The work group recommended coordination and oversight of the planning, financing, and administration of the HUBS through the ‘Statewide Administrative Autism Unit’ in conjunction with the ‘Statewide Interagency and Family Coordination Team.’ The regional HUBS were to begin using the existing six Project PEAK referral areas with the flexibility to geographically alter the configurations as more information is gained regarding the location of people with autism and their families.

The working group recommended that the regional HUBS be staffed by one autism specialist with primary staffing and coordination to be provided through DHS-DDSD and OSDE-SES as the major agencies benefiting from the system. Request to be made to DRS to fund at least a portion of one staff position. Additionally, specific programs that would benefit from access to the HUB system should be requested to provide staff or funding, including SoonerStart early intervention program and DHS-Child Care.

The roles of the regional HUBS included 1) linking families and people with autism at the regional level, 2) facilitating information and referral within their region and follow-up with families to assure they are connected with appropriate services, including training and respite care, 3) establishment of model projects, 4) comprehensive training, technical assistance, and on-going support to providers and families, and tiered crisis intervention.

Update: Little progress has been made in this area. The Regional Education Support Centers that were originally included as the foundation for the development of regional hubs were closed in fiscal year 2004. Closure of the RESCs requires development and implementation of a new plan for providing regional support for individuals with autism and their families.

Outcome: Efforts continue with emphasis on expanding support to individuals with ASD and their families in rural areas of the state.

Establish Model Projects as sites for research, services and training in best practices.

Recommendations: The working group recommended two model projects 1) a pilot with ten families using a self-determination service model where families decide on services as a group with a pot of money allotted to the group. Possible funding sources for this program include the DD Council with DHS-DDSD as coordinator and entity responsible for expanding the model if successful, and 2) facilitating the development of an employment and training model that includes the following criteria; individual specific, choices, purposeful/meaningful employment

and activities, assessment of employment abilities and preferences. Possible funding was identified as DD Council with DHS-DDSD as coordinator and entity responsible for expanding model if successful.

Update: Since 2002, several model projects have been implemented including the Autism Pilot Program, the Be Ready for Life: Model Secondary-Transition Project, and the Early Foundations: Autism Model Toddler and Outreach Project.

- Autism Pilot Program began in October of 2006 through funding from the Oklahoma Department of Human Services - Developmental Disabilities Services Division, the Oklahoma Autism Network piloted a program to provide in-home services and supports for persons with autism and their families. The purpose of the pilot was to develop a program that targeted the needs of individuals with autism and their families and expanded eligibility for DHS-DDSD waived services by making participants eligible with a diagnosis of autism regardless of IQ level. The pilot was based on services that have been shown to be effective in working with children with autism and their families. The goals of the pilot included helping families 1) to strengthen their capacity to support their children and their children's development through training, consultation, and coaching, and 2) to build their natural support networks in their communities such as childcare and accessing other community programs and activities. Participants in the program included 30 families; 15 in the Oklahoma City metro area and 15 families in the Tulsa metro area. The pilot program ended November 2008 due to lack of funding to continue the program.
- Be Ready for Life: Model Secondary Transition Project began in 2008 through funding provided to the Oklahoma Family Center for Autism (OFCA) and the Edmond Family Center for Autism (EFCA) as a fiscal award from Edmond Memorial High School. A portion of the award is allotted to develop a model secondary-transition program. OFCA, EFCA, Edmond Public Schools, the Zarrow Center at the University of Oklahoma and OAN will participate on the development team. The first project is planned for June 2009 with a week long intensive training for educators, parents, and youth with ASD. Outcomes will focus on higher education, employment, and independent living, as well as replication in other school districts within Oklahoma.
- Early Foundation: Autism Model and Outreach Project is funded through Oklahoma State Department of Education and is a collaborative effort by the Professional Development in Autism Center and Project PEAK at the Child Study Center. The purpose of the project is to address challenges within the current service systems including high intensity services in an inclusive model and to provide training for students, professionals and families. The project serves children with ASD from age of diagnosis through the fourth birthday or until the child is eligible to be included in a general education pre-kindergarten program. The project began with nine children in Oklahoma County and began replication of a second site in March 2009. The project will serve as a model for communities throughout the state of Oklahoma. The project began in July of 2007 and three replication sites are anticipated by July 2009.

- **Play With Me: Model Autism Program for Community Collaboration**
The project is designed to support the development of age-appropriate play skills in young children with ASD (or suspected ASD) in an integrated setting with participation of community programs, SoonerStart early intervention personnel, and families. The project is currently being implemented by the First Presbyterian Church of Edmond and the Oklahoma Autism Network.

Level 3: Community-based Services and Supports

Community-based Services and Supports

Expand the array and quality of community-based services and supports available with each region.

Comment: The working group recommended expanding the array and quality of community-based services and supports available within each region through support from local school districts, other local agencies, and parents. In addition, on-site technical assistance and model programs for DHS-DDSD providers, local school districts, families and others in addition to tiered crisis intervention. Level 3 also included phase-in expansion of the existing DHS-DDSD waiver programs by removing the requirement that an individual with autism have a diagnosis of mental retardation as a condition of eligibility. The group also recommended investigating methods for expanding the number of community medical practitioners providing services to individuals with autism.

Update: While the array of services available to individuals with ASD and their families has increased since development of the *Oklahoma Plan* in 2002, there continues to be shortage of professionals and services to meet the growing needs of Oklahomans affected by autism. The greatest growth in available services has been in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa metro areas. Families living in rural areas of Oklahoma continue to have limited access to information, training, and professional resources in their area.

Outcome: Efforts continue

Appendix A: Oklahoma Services and Supports

Aaron's Bridge

Aaron's Bridge, a 501c3 non-profit organization was developed in 2007 by Keith and Joni Geary. The mission for Aaron's Bridge is to facilitate access to more treatment options in Oklahoma for children with developmental disabilities, including Autism Spectrum Disorder. Aaron's Bridge has sponsored several presentations on biomedical intervention and is collaborating with the Autism Research Institute for a mini-Defeat Autism Now conference scheduled for June 2009.

Act Early Summit Team

Act Early Summit team is a state team initiated by the Centers for Disease Control, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities that includes key stakeholders including state agencies, parents, physicians, and service providers. The purpose of the committee is to identify ways to enhance screening and early identification of autism. The team is currently focused on dissemination of the Learn the Signs, Act Early Kits and information to physicians and other professionals.

Be Ready for Life: Secondary and Post-Secondary Transition Model Program

In March 2008, the Oklahoma Family Center for Autism (OFCA) and the Edmond Family Center for Autism (EFCA) were the recipients of a fiscal award from Edmond Memorial High School. A portion of the award is allotted to develop a model secondary-transition program in the Edmond Public Schools. OFCA, EFCA, Edmond Public Schools, the Zarrow Center at the University of Oklahoma and OAN will participate on the development team. Outcomes will focus on higher education, employment, and independent living, as well as replication in other school districts within Oklahoma.

Camelot of Oklahoma

Camelot's Residential Treatment Center located in Northeast Oklahoma City serves children ages 5 to 18. Information, education, and support are provided in a safe, accepting, and trusting environment to facilitate a successful return to family and community living. The Autism Program at Camelot uses an eclectic approach incorporating the following components: visual supports, structured learning, communication systems, direct instruction, behavioral strategies, and family support. They utilize the structure of TEACCH and DIR (Dr. Greenspan's Developmental, Individual Differences, and Relationship-based Program).

Community Providers

Please visit www.okautism.org for a list of providers in Oklahoma serving individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

Department of Rehabilitative Services

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) expands opportunities for employment, independent life and economic self-sufficiency by helping Oklahomans with disabilities bridge barriers to success in the workplace, school and at home. Some of the divisions include: 1) Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR): employment

services for people with any disability, except blindness; 2) Division of Visual Services (DVS): employment and independent living services for people who are blind or visually impaired; 3) Disability Determination Division: Determines medical eligibility for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), 4) Oklahoma School for the Deaf: educational programs for children who are deaf or hard of hearing; and 5) Oklahoma School for the Blind: educational programs for children who are blind or visually impaired.

Early Foundations: Autism Model and Outreach Project

Funded through Oklahoma State Department of Education, the Early Foundations project is a collaborative effort by the Professional Development in Autism Center and Project PEAK at the Child Study Center. The Oklahoma Autism Network assisted in the early development of this model project. The purpose of the project is to address challenges within the current service systems including high intensity services in an inclusive model and to provide training for students, professionals and families. The project serves nine children with ASD from age of diagnosis through the fourth birthday or until the child is eligible to be included in a general education pre-kindergarten program. The project will serve as a model for communities throughout the state of Oklahoma. The project began in July of 2007 and three replication sites are anticipated by July 2009.

Easter Seals Oklahoma: Autism Therapeutic Day School

The Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention (EIBI) program offers an individualized, comprehensive program for children ages two through five who have been diagnosed with autism, and for their families. This program utilizes components of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) in a fun learning environment that allows each child to engage in small steps toward typical childhood behavior.

Local Education Agencies

The mission at the Oklahoma State Department of Education is to improve student success through: service to schools, parents and students; leadership for education reform; and regulation/deregulation of state and federal laws to provide accountability while removing any barriers to student success. Each local school district provides special education services to students (3-21 years) who are eligible.

Oklahoma Assistive Technology Center (OATC)

OATC is dedicated to providing quality assistive technology services to Oklahoman's with disabilities and their families, to providing professional and communication education and technical assistance, and to research. Services provided are intended to assist individuals to participate fully in their own communities in the most cost-effective and timely manner possible. Services provided are age-appropriate, scientifically sound, and are designed to result in functional outcomes meaningful to the person and the person's family or caregivers. These services are intended to meet the high quality assurance standards. OATC is committed to education and training for professionals. OATC also provides education and training for colleges and universities, and for public and private agencies. They are also committed to research designed to evaluate the outcomes of assistive technology and the cost benefit of the technology services, and to expand knowledge in the application of assistive technology.

The Oklahoma Autism Alliance

The Oklahoma Autism Alliance, a collaboration between the OAN and Oklahoma Family Center for Autism (hereafter referred to as OFCA), is a leadership forum for the state's parent-led organizations focused on autism, provides information about providers and other resources in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma Autism Network (OAN)

The Oklahoma Autism Network is committed to improving the outcomes and quality of life for individuals with autism and their families through education, professional development, advocacy, and systems change while respecting individual preferences, adhering to research and best practices, and promoting community inclusion. The Oklahoma Autism Network was established in October 2003 as a statewide administrative unit to facilitate the planning, financing and administration of the various recommendations of the *Individuals with Autism and Their Families: Oklahoma Plan*. The OAN supports individuals across the full autism spectrum from diagnosis through adulthood. Activities include: 1) coordinated the development and implementation of the Autism Pilot Program; 2) serving as the state's information and referral system providing evidence-based information through our toll-free telephone line, a comprehensive website, and trainings and technical assistance to families and professionals; 3) supporting the various parent-led and community organizations across the state to reach individuals in communities where they live; 4) collaborating with higher education, state agencies, parent initiatives and other programs to continually improve systems of services and supports including workforce development, policies and procedures, funding, and legislation; 5) coordinating activities with other groups and programs focused on Autism Spectrum Disorders so as to maximize the limited resources in the state versus duplicating programs and services; 6) bringing professionals from the private and public sector together through coordination of the Oklahoma City Professional Autism Coalition and collaboration with the Tulsa Professional Autism Network; and 7) offering a resource center that includes a library with books, videos, and access to tools to create low-tech supports, such as visual schedules and picture boards. The program is sponsored by the Tolbert Center for Developmental Disabilities at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center and funded by the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Services and the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services Division.

Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Childcare Division

Oklahoma Child Care Services (OCCS) has the responsibility of making sure Oklahoma's children and their parents have access to licensed, affordable, high-quality child care where children have the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services Division

The mission of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services Division is to help individuals and families in need help themselves lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives. The state office staff provides direction and support to the area offices through program and policy developmental and over-sight.

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse

The mission of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services is to promote healthy communities and provide the highest quality care to enhance the well-being of all Oklahomans. Services available through the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services will promote productive lifestyles and set the national standard for prevention, treatment, and recovery for those affected by mental illnesses, substance abuse disorders, and domestic and sexual violence.

Oklahoma Family Network (OFN)

The OFN is a 501c3 non-profit organization. They provide resources for families who are raising children with special needs, from prenatal through adulthood, by providing information, education, and emotional support. They also have established a mentorship program for parents.

Oklahoma Health Care Authority, Autism Workgroup

The Oklahoma Health Care Authority in collaboration with the Oklahoma Department of Human Services – Developmental Disabilities Service Division, the Child Study Center, and the Oklahoma Autism Network are investigating the options for expanding Medicaid coverage for services related to autism including behavioral therapy.

Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy

The Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy has included an autism insurance equity bill on their 2008 and 2009 legislative agendas.

Oklahoma Professional Autism Coalition

Oklahoma Professional Autism Coalition is coordinated by the OAN and brings professionals in the Oklahoma City metro together to share information, network, and learn about resources.

Oklahoma State Department of Education, SoonerStart Early Intervention

The mission of the SoonerStart Early Intervention Program is to use an individualized, comprehensive, coordinated system of services and supports to enhance the abilities of Oklahoma infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays and strengthen the capacity of their families to support their development. The Oklahoma State Department of Education is the lead agency.

Parent-led Organizations

See appendix B

Play With Me: Model Autism Program for Community Collaboration

The project is designed to support the development of age-appropriate play skills in young children with ASD (or suspected ASD) in an integrated setting with participation of community programs, SoonerStart early intervention personnel, and families. The project is currently being implemented by the First Presbyterian Church of Edmond and the Oklahoma Autism Network.

Programming and Evaluation for Kids with Autism (Project PEAK)

Autism Support Services are provided through a collaborative effort of the Child Study Center and the Oklahoma State Department of Education. Project PEAK is a training and support

network for educating children (age 3 through 21 years) with Autism Spectrum Disorders, which 1) coordinates with existing professional development and technical assistance programs; 2) supports local efforts to build capacity within school districts; 3) employs evidence-based/research-based practices; and 4) partners with local parent support groups.

Shadow Mountain Behavioral Health System

Shadow Mountain Behavioral Health System is a psychiatric hospital offering a comprehensive continuum of behavioral healthcare services, including acute, residential, therapeutic foster care, school-based, and outpatient programs for children, adolescents and their families. Shadow Mountain Behavioral Health System provides treatment for a wide variety of psychiatric disorders in a safe, secure, and nurturing environment. Other services include neurological evaluation, psychological evaluation, speech and language assessments, medical history, physical examination, medication management, dietary consultation, and an individualized treatment plan.

SoonerStart Early Intervention Interagency Coordination Council subcommittee on Low-Incidence Disabilities/Autism

The Low-Incidence Disabilities/Autism subcommittee is convened by the ICC Policy and Funding committee. The purpose of the subcommittee is to review best practice with regard to early intervention services for children with low-incidence disabilities and autism and make recommendations to the ICC regarding SoonerStart early intervention services in Oklahoma. The Oklahoma State Department of Education is the lead agency for the SoonerStart Early Intervention program.

SoonerSuccess

SoonerSuccess provides support to families of children or youth with a developmental disability, mental health need, chronic health care need, or abuse/neglect issues. SoonerSuccess provides assistance to families in accessing services and supports through county coordinators currently located in nine Oklahoma counties.

Statewide Training and Regional Supports (STARS)

The mission of STARS is to support the provision of individualized, comprehensive, multidisciplinary, family-centered, community-based programs and services for people with disabilities (across the lifespan) through a coordinated training system. STARS is: a major component of the comprehensive system of personnel development for Oklahoma's Early Intervention program, SoonerStart and a centralized training and technical assistance program with supports at the individual and team levels. The program is sponsored by the Tolbert Center for Developmental Disabilities at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center and funded by the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Services and the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services Division.

Since 2003, STARS has provided SoonerStart staff more than 25 trainings regarding ASD. In 2003 SoonerStart staff attended a mandatory course specific to autism. One additionally, non-mandatory course, offered four times in collaboration with the Oklahoma Autism Network, was a competency-based training that included screening, preventing and replacing challenging behaviors, program planning, intervention and evaluation.

Teacher Registry Project

Registry Training for Special Education Professionals (for students age 3 through 21 years) is approved training in five federal criteria areas: autism, traumatic brain injury, multiple disabilities and deaf/blindness, and other health impairment. These are areas for which no Oklahoma special education certification exists. Effective January 1, 1994, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) made this 32 hour training a requirement for special education teachers serving students in any of these areas. The organization of these trainings and maintenance of training data are coordinated by the Center for Learning and Leadership through a contract with the OSDE. This project is in its fifteenth year of implementation.

Training content is developed and presented in a way that helps teachers use what they learn in their school settings. Content is divided into four components, 1) overview: provides a basic understanding of the disability category and implications for educational evaluation and programming; 2) family and self-advocate perspectives: provided by individuals with disabilities and family members who discuss their personal experiences with public school services; 3) hands on strategies: achieved through utilization of individual student profiles provided by participants and presenters; participants work in teams to interpret evaluation information, determine what additional information is needed, what additional expertise or resources may be needed and how to formulate goals and objectives collaboratively with families; and 4) practicum or outside assignment: designed to provide the opportunity for participants to practice the skills with a student.

Tulsa Professional Autism Network

Tulsa Professional Autism Network is coordinated by the Tulsa ARC and the Tulsa Autism Foundation and brings professionals in Tulsa metro together to share information, network, and learn about resources.

University of Central Oklahoma, BCBA program

The University of Central Oklahoma has established a training program for the treatment of autism. Students completing the program can become board-certified behavior analysts specializing in autism. A result of Senate Bill 2071, the Integrated Behavior Analysis program was developed after the Legislature approved Senate Bill 2071, an initiative to create a training system in Oklahoma to meet the needs of autistic children.

Appendix B: Oklahoma Parent-Led Organizations

ADA

Circle Time of Ada

Circle Time of Ada began in 2008 and provides a monthly meeting for parents, professionals, and caregivers. For more information visit <http://www.okautism.org>

ALVA

Alva Autism and Special Needs Support Group

The Alva support group began in 2007 and provides a monthly meeting for parents and other caregivers. For more information visit <http://www.okautism.org>

CANTON

F.O.C.A.S. Support Group

The F.O.C.A.S support group provides a monthly meeting for parent and other caregivers. For more information visit <http://www.autismfocas.org>

CHICKASHA

Autism Spectrum Disorder Support Group

The Chickasha support group provides bi-monthly meetings for parents, caregivers, and teachers. For more information visit <http://www.okautism.org>

CLAREMORE

Claremore Autism Support Group

The Claremore support group is a part of The Hope Foundation. This group provides a monthly meeting for parents and other caregivers. For more information visit <http://www.easternokautism.com> or email hope@easternokautism.org

EDMOND

Biomedical Intervention Group (B.I.G.)

B.I.G.F began in 2007 and provides a monthly meeting for families interested in or currently providing biomedical and dietary interventions for their child on the spectrum including but not limited to DAN! and Yasko protocols. For more information visit <http://www.okautism.org>

Edmond Family Center for Autism

The Edmond Family Center for Autism is a branch of the Oklahoma Family Center for Autism 501c3 nonprofit group. The Edmond Family Center for Autism began in 2002 and provides a monthly meeting at First Presbyterian Church that includes parents and programs for children, teens, and adults with ASD and their siblings. The Edmond Family Center for Autism provides quarterly family fun nights and several projects focused on improving services to individuals affected by autism in the Edmond area including an Edmond School Task Force, a Community Training Task Force, a Marriage Preservation Task Force, and collaboration with the Oklahoma Autism Network in development of a model secondary-transition program. For more information visit <http://www.okautism.org>

ENID

Supporting the Pieces

This group started in 2008 and provides a monthly meeting for parents and other caregivers. For more information visit <http://www.supportingthepieces.com>

MUSKOGEE

Hope Foundation for Children with Autism and Related Disorders

The Hope Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit group that was formed in 2006 to support those affected by autism in eastern Oklahoma. The Hope Kids Therapy Center opened in 2007 to provide speech and occupational therapy to children in the Muskogee area. In addition to therapy services they provide monthly support group meetings. They have several additional groups that offer monthly meetings, including Claremore, Tahlequah, Vinita. For more information visit <http://www.easternokautism.com> or e-mail hope@easternokautism.org

NORMAN

Parents Fighting Autism

Parents Fighting Autism began in 2007 and offers a monthly meeting to provide support for parents considering or doing biomedical treatments for their child with ASD. For more information visit <http://www.aaronsbridge.org> or <http://www.okautism.org>

OKLAHOMA CITY

Aaron's Bridge

Aaron's Bridge was founded in August 2007 by Keith and Joni Geary, parents of a son with autism. The mission for Aaron's Bridge is to facilitate access to more treatment options in Oklahoma for children with developmental disabilities, including Autism Spectrum Disorder. Aaron's Bridge has sponsored several educational seminars featuring Dr. Bryan Jepson and is a sponsor for a mini-DAN conference scheduled for June 2009 in Oklahoma City. A priority of

Aaron's Bridge is to build a biomedical treatment and research facility in Oklahoma. For more information visit <http://www.aaronsbridge.org>

Autism Society of America Central Oklahoma (ASOCO)

The ASOCO was established in 1983 and is the Oklahoma chapter of the Autism Society of America. The ASOCO provides monthly meetings and also provides several other programs for families in collaboration with St. Luke's United Methodist Church. These programs include Samuel's Call which offers respite to families one Saturday a month and sensory friendly movies in collaboration with AMC movie theaters. For more information visit <http://www.asofok.org/>

Autism Speaks, local chapter

The local chapter of Autism Speaks began in 2006 and hosts the local Walk Now for Autism. The purpose of this event is to raise funds for autism research and to raise awareness about the increasing prevalence of autism. For more information visit <http://www.walknowforautism.org/oklahoma>

Oklahoma Family Center for Autism

The OFCA is a 501c3 non-profit organization that started in 2007 and provides a statewide leadership forum for the autism parent-led organizations in Oklahoma. OFCA collaborates with the Oklahoma Autism Network to sponsor a website, statewide e-newsletter, and also collaborates in the development of several model projects focused on supporting individuals with ASD in Oklahoma. For more information visit <http://www.okautism.org>

Oklahoma Family Network (OFN)

The OFN is a 501c3 non-profit organization. They provide resources for families who are raising children with special needs, from prenatal through adulthood, by providing information, education, and emotional support. They also have established a mentorship program for parents. For more information visit <http://www.oklahomafamilynetwork.org/ofn>

TeamAutism

TeamAutism.org was started by Stacey and Alan Danielson in July 2007. It is a comprehensive endurance training program for runners and walkers to benefit local individuals and families affected by autism. The goal of TeamAutism.org is to increase funding to support the Oklahoma Family Center for Autism while promoting fitness and healthy lifestyles. For more information visit <http://teamautism.spruz.net>

STILLWATER

Autism Support Group

The Stillwater support group offers a monthly meeting for parents and other caregivers. They provide childcare at the monthly meeting. For more information visit <http://www.okautism.org>

TULSA

Autism Center of Tulsa, Inc.

The Autism Center of Tulsa, Inc. (formerly the Tulsa Autism Foundation) was started in 2005. They focus on providing programming and resources that support the Tulsa area including: community awareness and outreach, early screening and intervention, safety, parent and professional information and training as well as family support and on-site resources. For more information visit <http://www.autismtulsa.org> or email info@autismtulsa.org

Supporting and Networking Group for Moms

The Supporting and Networking Group for Moms offers a monthly meeting to support moms of children with Asperger Syndrome. This group provides opportunities for networking with each other and to mentor each other, as well as find help in the Tulsa area. For more information visit <http://www.okautism.org>

VINITA

Vinita Autism and Special Needs Support Group

The Vinita support group is part of the Hope Foundation. This group offers a monthly meeting for parents and other caregivers. They provide support to anyone that is affected in some way by an autism spectrum disorder or other special needs. For more information visit <http://www.easternokautism.com>

YUKON

Canadian Valley Autism Support Group

This group provides a monthly meeting and focused on supporting parents and caregivers of individuals with ASD in the Yukon, Mustang, El Reno, and Bethany area. For more information visit <http://www.okautism.org>