

THE AUTISM BILL OF RIGHTS ©

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People have a right to services and supports. People who are autistic have a right to access these services and supports but are often not available. Dr. Yeager is the author of the Autism Bill of Rights. Here you will find a full explanation of those rights. It is Dr. Yeager's and TEAAM Autism's hope that one day these will all indeed become rights.

THE AUTISM BILL OF RIGHTS

1. Persons living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder have the right to coordinated accurate & appropriate assessment and diagnostic services.
2. Persons living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder have the right to adequate early intervention services.
3. Persons living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder have the right to adequate and accurate medical support services.
4. Persons living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder have the right to a free and appropriate public education.
5. Persons living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder have the right to coordinated and appropriate treatment, programming and support services.
6. Persons living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder have the right to adequate and supportive transition services.
7. Persons living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder have the right to adequate support for competitive employment opportunities.
8. Persons living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder have the right to adequate and sufficient supported living arrangements.
9. Persons living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder have the right to the opportunity for full community inclusion.
10. Persons living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder have the right to insightful and aggressive futures planning.

1. PERSONS LIVING WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER HAVE THE RIGHT TO COORDINATED ACCURATE & APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES.

There is a great need for access to diagnostic services that are accurately administered and interpreted by professionals that understand the complex nature of autism spectrum disorders.

Diagnoses of autism spectrum disorders require a comprehensive approach to diagnosis in order to understand the complex nature of the spectrum.

In order to guide parents and professionals toward appropriate treatment pathways, mass dissemination of educational materials is needed to assist in the recognition of problems at the earliest age possible in the development of a child who potentially has an autism spectrum disorder.

As diagnostic tools evolve, diagnostic services must also evolve in order to avoid predetermined ideas and notions based on antiquated diagnostic techniques as well as criteria that are too narrow in diagnostic scope.

2. PERSONS LIVING WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER HAVE THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES.

Since studies show conclusively that early intervention is imperative in addressing the long term effects of autism spectrum disorders, the earlier the intervention begins the better the outcomes.

In order to be effective, early intervention programs must have an aggressive design so that all of the communication, social, behavioral and sensory needs of each child are met.

The most formative years for development are between birth and 7 years of age. Therefore, early intervention programs must include a plan to continue services without interruption between early intervention and transition to pre-kindergarten.

3. PERSONS LIVING WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER HAVE THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE AND ACCURATE MEDICAL SUPPORT SERVICES.

As more is learned about the physiological aspects of autism spectrum disorders, access to physicians, particularly pediatricians who have extensive training in the area of identifying at-risk children, becomes even more important as a referral source to appropriate diagnostic services.

Many treatment modalities have proven to be effective with children with an autism spectrum disorder. Therefore, there is a great need for widely accepted medical treatment protocols that can be used universally by physicians in the treatment of autism spectrum disorders.

The medical community at-large is a large stake-holder in the autism spectrum community and should play a major role in the development of an extensive service delivery continuum.

There are many questions that need to be answered and the medical community's active participation in aggressive research will greatly contribute to solutions in the areas of prevention, diagnosis, treatment and maybe one day even a cure.

4. PERSONS LIVING WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER HAVE THE RIGHT TO A FREE AND APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION.

All school personnel should be trained in the nature of autism spectrum disorders as well as effective intervention strategies if they are expected to be successful at their jobs.

Children with an autism spectrum disorder deserve to receive an education that is best suited for their learning strengths and learning challenges.

Each child's education should be free of prejudice, free of unnecessary obstacles, but most importantly should be free of charge to parents. Due to the inadequate existing system of support, many parents find themselves at financial risk or in financial ruin in an attempt to find the needed diagnostic and support services required to establish an appropriate educational path.

All children with an autism spectrum disorder should be able to receive an adequate and appropriate education in the public school system with reasonable modifications. Modifications must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

5. PERSONS LIVING WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER HAVE THE RIGHT TO COORDINATED AND APPROPRIATE TREATMENT, PROGRAMMING AND SUPPORT SERVICES.

Adequate and appropriate services continue to be difficult to find for individuals with autism spectrum disorders and their families, even though they have become much more visible. There is a continuing need to increase the availability of these services.

Information about all treatment and programming strategies should be made available to individuals and families so that informed decisions can be made as to treatment pathways for each person based on individualized needs. Even though many strategies claim "superiority", all should be examined for their efficacy in respects to each individual.

Due to the fact that the autism spectrum population is increasing dramatically, the services that are available must experience a growth that will meet this ever growing population. Service availability must also grow at a rate to adequately provide services on a scale less that is sufficient to meet the needs of all. Any other strategy will only leave many individual's needs unaddressed.

6. PERSONS LIVING WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER HAVE THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE AND SUPPORTIVE TRANSITION SERVICES.

Individuals with autism spectrum disorders experience and cope with all of the typical "growing pains" through each developmental stage in an atypical way. Through all of these stages, each individual continues to be challenged by their disability and require specific supports to help soften the affects of these changes.

Options must be made available to individuals and their families that will assist them into transitioning from one developmental stage to the next. These options need to be made available through a

continuum of services that address each individual's needs throughout a lifetime.

7. PERSONS LIVING WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER HAVE THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE SUPPORT FOR COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

Employment is a major component that contributes to the quality of life of all individuals. This certainly includes persons diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

Employment opportunities should be made available to all persons with an autism spectrum disorder with consideration to their areas of interest, their ability to succeed and to their job satisfaction.

Awareness plays a key role in enhancing the general public's understanding that persons with an autism spectrum disorder can be productive and reliable employees who can contribute greatly to a business or service.

8. PERSONS LIVING WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER HAVE THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE AND SUFFICIENT SUPPORTED LIVING ARRANGEMENTS.

As individuals with an autism spectrum disorder grow into adulthood they want and deserve to live in the least restrictive environment. This will allow them to live with the degree of autonomy that they both wish and can manage.

Inter-dependent living arrangements can be very successful if proper supports are provided to ensure that individual life skill areas which are problematic are addressed.

A wide array of living options needs to be made available to individuals and their families so that options that are appropriate and comfortable are accessible. These options should include group homes, supervised apartments, home-of-our-own, and other case management independent living services.

9. PERSONS LIVING WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER HAVE THE RIGHT TO THE OPPORTUNITY FOR FULL COMMUNITY INCLUSION.

Participating in life and life's activities should not be an option or an obstacle. Opportunities that make full community participation and inclusion possible should be a part of all community planned activities.

Supporting an individual to be able to participate in community activities and services can be very complicated, encumbered by nuances specific to autism spectrum disorders. Autism support professionals should be available to assist individuals to access community activities and supports in a

way that will take their autism spectrum disorder into consideration.

10. PERSONS LIVING WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER HAVE THE RIGHT TO INSIGHTFUL AND AGGRESSIVE FUTURES PLANNING.

At each stage of planning for an individual with an autism spectrum disorder, it should be recognized and considered that you are planning for a lifetime, not just the moment, day, week, month or year. Each particular plan should be a piece of the puzzle that fits nicely into the big picture of life. This can be accomplished through insightful planning with aggressive goals and objectives that all center around the individual and the things that will make their life a success.