

CT AUTISM ACTION COALITION
POLICY PRIORITIES – LOW COST/NO COST – SPECIAL ACT 08-5
RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACCOMPLISH

PRIORITY #1:

Understanding the Individual: Parents, administrators, educators and paraprofessional staff members need to better understand the core characteristics of ASD in order to effectively support program development and consistently implement appropriate, evidenced-based practices. The need to understand the uniqueness of each child was frequently identified throughout the public forums. What was learned from the data was that selection of instructional strategies or methodologies to assist students with ASD/DD was often based on availability or what was deemed the conventional wisdom among educators from a particular region in the state. Seldom were strategies targeted to the unique characteristics of the learner, particularly students with ASD.

PRIORITY #2

Parents as Partners: Ensuring parent involvement and partnership in the educational planning process for students with ASD/DD is inconsistent across the state. Frequent concerns were expressed at the public meetings, particularly as expressed by parents, that schools do not appreciate their perspectives. There is a recognition that parents bring to the team knowledge of their child and family that is essential in serving the educational needs of their child. The need for training of parents and school personnel in the importance of and skills needed for engaging parents in educational planning and placement decisions for their children was deemed critical. Moreover, as noted in our General Findings and Conclusions section above, joint dialogue and training between parents and professionals may be critical to cementing these kinds of partnerships.

PRIORITY #3

The data suggest that there is a lack of awareness among teachers of what resources are available to help gain this expertise or where to look for ongoing support when further expertise may be needed. It was identified that staff members working with these students need improved skills in identifying appropriate methodologies for instruction that meet the unique, individual needs of each particular student.

PRIORITY #4

Meaningful Participation and Climate of Relationships: Closely related to the social skills theme above, a common viewpoint expressed in the forums was that teachers need more assistance in integrating children with ASD/DD into the fabric of the classroom, particularly with respect to engaging the children with ASD/DD with their typical peers and vice versa. Respondents identified that simply placing a child with ASD/DD into the classroom did not assure that the child would be meaningfully and appropriately engaged or included as an integral part of the class community. The development of social relationships was identified as being vital to the child's overall educational performance and should be a major consideration for training. Consistent with other themes, such training is provided sporadically across the state with regional gaps in the availability of and ongoing support for accomplishing this educational goal. It is also important to have school personnel with the knowledge and skill to aid students with ASD/DD acclimate or assimilate to their learning environments.

PRIORITY #5

The Commissioner of the State Department of Education or his/her designee should seek advisement from a consortium of agencies in addressing the teaching of children with autism and other developmental disabilities. This Consortium should have as its core group the Commissioners of the Departments of Higher Education and Developmental Services or their designees and the President of Southern Connecticut State University or his/her designee. Additionally the Consortium should seek representation from:

- the University of Connecticut Health Center's Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)
- the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI- Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC)
- the State Education Resource Center (SERC);
- the Connecticut Chapter of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE-CT);
- the Consortium of Independent Colleges;
- the alliance of Directors of Special Education of the Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs);
- the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities;
- the Independent Advisory Council of the Division of Autism Services (IACDAS).

Recommendation #1- Consortium

First-Year Budget

Budget Category: Personnel Consortium members – Representatives from designated organizations and agencies	In-kind contribution
Part-time secretary (.5 FTE)	In-kind contribution from consortium members
Benefits	In-kind contribution
TRAVEL	
In/Out of state based on state govt travel rates	In-Kind contribution from consortium members
EQUIPMENT	
Computer (work station, desk, setup, searches, communication)	In-kind contribution from consortium members
SUPPLIES	
General office supplies, mailings, etc.	\$1500
Work site	In-Kind from agencies
PERSONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	
Parent stipends	\$3000
TOTAL	\$4500

CONNECTICUT AUTISM ACTION COALITION (CAAC)

Meetings held at FAVOR, Inc. – 2138 Silas Deane Highway, Rocky Hill, CT 06067 – 860-563-3232

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide one unified voice, supporting CT in the development and improvement of service access and quality for all individuals who are affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders.

How do we implement the Mission?:

1. All Members will share all relevant information regarding Autism in CT – training, events, conferences, proposals, financial resources, etc. at each meeting.
2. All Active Members agree/vote annually on 2-3 projects on which to focus the CAAC resources available through its members – time, financial, facilities, equipment, etc.
3. Utilize Supportive Members effectively to assist in projects where appropriate
4. Agree to widely distribute information as requested by CAAC members, to your list serves, websites, or any other communication source.
5. Members may call upon the group for specific support requests (clearly detailed to avoid misunderstandings) – attendance at events, phone calls, letter writing, etc. – Requests must be specific and your ability to participate should be communicated back to the requestor.
6. Need a system to identify who is involved in what? Opportunity to opt out from any project or commitment that CAAC is making as a group.
7. Through seeking consensus on public policy positions and advocating for them – a substantial majority agrees – possibly not everyone

VISION STATEMENT

A world in which Autism, is so clearly understood, that it is seen as a character trait not a disability, allowing the talents and strengths of an individual with Autism Spectrum Disorders, to be identified, utilized and embraced by the community in which they live.

How do we achieve this?

1. CAAC focuses on the outcome
2. CAAC members model the behavior you want to see in the world
3. Educate everyone you meet
4. Share the vision with everyone you know
5. Create opportunities for communities to perform the behaviors

CT AUTISM ACTION COALITION (CAAC)

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Member Organizations:

Autism Society of Connecticut (ASCONN)
Autism Speaks
Autism Spectrum Resource Center (ASRC)
Bethany Orange Woodbridge Community Collaborative (BOW)
CT Bureau of Special Education
CT Center for Child Development (CCCD)
CT Department of Developmental Services (DDS)
CT Department of Public Health
CT Families for Effective Autism Treatment (CT FEAT)
CT Family Support Network (CTFSN)
CT Special Education PTA (SEPTA) Council
Families United for Children's Mental Health—CT
Family to Family Health Information
Farmington Valley Asperger's Network (FAVAN)
FAVOR—Statewide Family Advocacy
FOCUS Alternative Learning Center
Helping Hands CT
The Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association (LACASA)
Lighthouse Psycho-educational Services
North Central Community Collaborative (NCCC)
North Star Support Group
Rt. 2 Community Collaborative
SE Mental Health Systems of Care
The Village for Families & Children, Inc.
United Community & Family Services (UCFS)
University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)

If you are interested in participating in this organization contact:
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