

Summary

The Combating Autism Act of 2006

A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to combat autism through research, screening, intervention and education.

Introduced by Sen. Rick Santorum [R-PA] (S. 845) and Rep Mary Bono Mack [R-CA] (HR 2421) and became Public Law No 109-416 on 12/19/2006.

Supports NIH Research: The law amends the Public Health Service Act to rewrite provisions governing National Institutes of Health (NIH) autism research. Authorizes the Director of NIH to consolidate program activities to improve program efficiencies and outcomes. Requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Director of NIH, to review and report to Congress on NIH centers of excellence.

Boosts CDC Surveillance: Allows the Secretary, acting through the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to award grants or cooperative agreements **for the collection, analysis, and reporting of state epidemiological data on autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities**. Requires the Secretary, acting through the Director of CDC, to award grants or cooperative agreements for the establishment of regional centers of excellence in such disabilities' epidemiology to collect and analyze information on the number, incidence, correlates and causes of such disabilities.

Increases Education, Training, and Screening: Requires the Secretary to establish and evaluate activities to: (1) **inform and educate** on such disabilities to increase awareness of developmental milestones; (2) **promote research** into the development and validation of reliable screening tools for such disabilities; (3) **promote early screening** of individuals at higher risk for such disabilities; and (4) **increase the number of individuals who are able to confirm or rule out a diagnosis** of such a disability and provide evidence-based interventions for individuals diagnosed with such disabilities.

Directs the Secretary to **provide culturally competent information regarding such disabilities and evidence-based interventions for individuals and their families through state and federal programs and community organizations**. Requires states to provide individuals with information about state and local resources. Allows the Secretary to require the Governor of the State to designate a public agency as a lead agency to coordinate these activities.

Requires the Secretary to: (1) develop a curriculum for continuing education to assist individuals in recognizing the need for, and using, valid and reliable screening tools; (2) collect, store, coordinate, and make publicly available such tools and other products that are used by federal programs; (3) expand existing interdisciplinary training opportunities or opportunities to increase the number of sites able to diagnose individuals with autism spectrum disorder or other developmental disabilities; (4) promote research into additional tools for shortening the time required to confirm diagnoses of such disabilities and for detecting individuals with such disabilities at an early age; and (5) promote research to determine evidence-based practices for interventions for such individuals, develop guidelines for those interventions, and disseminate information related to such research and guidelines.

Establishes the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee to: (1) coordinate all efforts within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) concerning autism spectrum disorder; (2) develop and update advances in research; (3) monitor and make recommendations to the Secretary regarding federal activities related to such disorder; (4) make recommendations to the Secretary regarding public participation in decisions relating to such disorder; (5) develop and annually update a strategic plan for autism spectrum disorder research; and (6) submit to Congress such strategic plan and related updates. Sets forth reporting requirements.

Authorizes appropriations for FY2007-FY2011. \$189 million is authorized for FY 2009. Congress included the following appropriations in FY 2008:

- Autism services, diagnosis and treatment at the Health Resources and Services Administration: \$36,354,000, a \$16.354 million increase over Fiscal 2007 (\$37m was the level authorized by Combating Autism Act).
- Autism surveillance and awareness at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: \$16.212 million, a \$1.2m increase over Fiscal 2007 (\$16.5m was the level authorized by the Combating Autism Act).
- An estimated \$108.5 million for NIH-funded autism research.
- Implementation of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC): \$1 million within the budget of the National Institute of Mental Health is earmarked for IACC implementation.

In total, the 2008 fiscal appropriation was approximately \$162 million, as authorized by the Combating Autism Act.

Source: Library of Congress Thomas Bill Summary and Autism Speaks.