

# Support for the newly diagnosed family

by Lisa Poyta

When a young child is newly diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, the experience can be overwhelming and frightening for the entire family. For some, the diagnosis may come as a shock; for others, it may bring a sense of relief after months of unknowns. In either case, families typically have many unanswered questions and a host of needs to be met. Most questions concern services: What services are available? How do we access them? Frequently, newly diagnosed families turn to the Internet first to get information about autism and services—only to find a dizzying array of resources and conflicting advice. At Autism Delaware, newly diagnosed families can find answers.

## Available services

Autism Delaware provides newly diagnosed families with a range of useful statewide services. These include online support groups, parent coffee hours, and social events in which families gather, share ideas, and support each other. Autism Delaware also helps connect the parents of newly diagnosed children with mentor families who have experience with local support services and school programs.

Experienced staff members are also available to help newly diagnosed families. Because many have children on the spectrum, these staff members understand the options for education, care, and therapy throughout Delaware. Newly diagnosed families can also contact Autism Delaware to request a new parent package containing basic information about autism, a Delaware resource guide, and a copy of the quarterly newsletter.

Other resources include workshops, conferences, and recreational activities. Autism Delaware also

sponsors speakers and maintains local and national resource links on its website, [www.delautism.org](http://www.delautism.org).

Currently, Autism Delaware is working on improving access to information by upgrading the website and developing a more customized resource directory that will be available on a CD.

## Needed services

Health-care coverage for autism-related services is one of the greatest needs of newly diagnosed families. Insurance is needed to supplement therapies provided by school programs as well as for children who are home-schooled or ineligible for services through the Delaware Autism Program. In 2010, Autism Delaware led the effort to draft legislation requiring insurance companies to cover basic therapies for autism, including applied behavior analysis (ABA) and speech, physical, and occupational therapies. We hope to see our efforts come to fruition in 2011.

If you would like more information on this subject, contact our Asperger's resource coordinator, Heidi Mizell, at [heidi.mizell@delautism.org](mailto:heidi.mizell@delautism.org). If you are interested in getting involved in advocacy for ABA and other services, contact our policy and events director, Kim Siegel, at [kim.siegel@delautism.org](mailto:kim.siegel@delautism.org).

## Add your voice

Autism Delaware needs to hear from newly diagnosed families so we can understand and meet your diverse and unique needs. Please contact us today at (302) 224-6020, or email us at [delautism@delautism.org](mailto:delautism@delautism.org).



Helping People and Families Affected by Autism

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