

CHAPTER 169

AN ACT establishing the Asperger's Syndrome Pilot Initiative and supplementing Title 30 of the Revised Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

C.30:6D-62.3 Findings, declarations relative to Asperger's Syndrome.

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:
 - a. Asperger's Syndrome is a Pervasive Developmental Disorder often characterized by autistic-like behaviors and marked by deficiencies in social and communication skills;
 - b. Children with Asperger's Syndrome tend to be self-absorbed, have difficulty making friends, are often preoccupied with their own interests and easily become the victims of teasing or bullying;
 - c. The best studies conducted to date indicate that Asperger's Syndrome is five to six times more common than classic autism;
 - d. Those with the disorder are often misdiagnosed with other neurological disorders such as Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorders or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder;
 - e. Although those with Asperger's Syndrome have a better prognosis than those with other Pervasive Developmental Disorders, people with Asperger's Syndrome often continue to demonstrate difficulties in social interactions well into their adult lives and face an increased risk of developing psychosis, depression and anxiety;
 - f. Persons with Asperger's Syndrome who are diagnosed and treated early have an increased chance of living independently and leading healthy, productive lives;
 - g. Because individuals evidencing this syndrome may have normal to superior intelligence, and do not always evidence significant functional impairments across a range of life skills, they may not be eligible for services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department of Human Services;
 - h. The range of support needs for persons with Asperger's Syndrome typically includes: social skills training; social supports, including supported employment; housing supports; and psychiatric and psychological services for the treatment of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and other neurological disorders; and
 - i. The public policy of this State should seek to provide a vehicle to address the needs of those who suffer from Asperger's Syndrome through the establishment of a demonstration program that provides vocational, educational and social training services to individuals with this disorder.

C.30:6D-62.4 Asperger's Syndrome Pilot Initiative established in DHS.

2. The Commissioner of Human Services shall establish the Asperger's Syndrome Pilot Initiative in the Department of Human Services.
 - a. The purpose of the initiative shall be to provide vocational, educational and social training services to persons with Asperger's Syndrome, through community-based service sites, which offer these individuals appropriate support, guidance and education to enable them to: further their education, achieve gainful employment, develop meaningful friendships, and become broadly competent adults who are able to lead fulfilling lives.
 - b. The commissioner shall contract with one or more entities to make services available Statewide under the initiative.
 - c. The initiative shall provide services, through an individualized approach to instruction and support for persons with Asperger's Syndrome, which address a comprehensive range of support needs for these individuals, including, at a minimum: social skills training; social

supports, including supported employment; housing supports; and psychiatric and psychological services for the treatment of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and other neurological disorders.

d. The commissioner shall report to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), on the initiative no later than two years after the date that it commences operations, and shall include in that report a detailed summary of its activities, an assessment of its cost-effectiveness, and any recommendations that the commissioner desires to make for the extension, expansion, modification or termination of the initiative.

3. The Commissioner of Human Services, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), shall adopt rules and regulations to effectuate the purposes of this act.

4. This act shall take effect on the 180th day after enactment, except that the Commissioner of Human Services may take such anticipatory administrative action in advance as shall be necessary for the implementation of the act.

Approved September 12, 2007.