

CHAPTER 173

AN ACT establishing the New Jersey Adults with Autism Task Force.

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

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:
 - a. Autism is a lifelong disability; and just as the autism spectrum covers a wide range of functional abilities, so does the need for services and supports for adults with autism;
 - b. Adults with autism face significant challenges in various aspects of their lives, including such areas as job training and placement, housing, and long-term care; however, much of the current focus on autism relates to education and development and neglects these other concerns;
 - c. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, one of every 94 children in this State has autism, which is the highest rate among the states examined by the CDC in the most comprehensive study of the prevalence of autism to date;
 - d. There is a pressing need for policymakers and advocates in New Jersey to formulate achievable goals for State government to meet in order to better serve the community of adults with autism in this State; and
 - e. It is in the public interest for the State to establish a New Jersey Adults with Autism Task Force to develop a comprehensive plan for meeting the various needs of adults with autism living in this State.

2. a. There is established the New Jersey Adults with Autism Task Force in the Department of Human Services. The purpose of the task force shall be to study and evaluate, and develop recommendations relating to, specific actionable measures to support and meet the needs of adults with autism who are residents of New Jersey, including, but not limited to, job training and placement, housing, and long-term care. The recommendations shall comprise the basis for a comprehensive plan for meeting the needs of adults with autism, which the task force shall present to the Governor and the Legislature pursuant to section 3 of this act.

- b. The task force shall consist of 13 members as follows:
 - (1) the Commissioners of Human Services, Health and Senior Services, Education, and Labor and Workforce Development, and the chairman of the Governor's Council for Medical Research and Treatment of Autism, or their designees, who shall serve *ex officio*; and
 - (2) eight public members, who shall be appointed no later than the 30th day after the effective date of this act, as follows:
 - (a) six persons appointed by the Governor, who shall include: one person upon the recommendation of The New Jersey Center for Outreach and Services for the Autism Community; one person upon the recommendation of Autism Speaks; one person upon the recommendation of ASPEN; one person who is an adult with autism; and two members of the public with a demonstrated expertise in issues relating to the work of the task force;
 - (b) one person appointed by the President of the Senate; and
 - (c) one person appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly.

Vacancies in the membership of the task force shall be filled in the same manner provided for the original appointments.

c. The Commissioner of Human Services or the commissioner's designee shall serve as chairperson of the task force. The task force shall organize as soon as practicable following the appointment of its members and shall select a vice-chairperson from among the members. The chairperson shall appoint a secretary who need not be a member of the task force.

d. The public members shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties and within the limits of funds available to the task force.

e. The task force shall be entitled to call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of any State, county or municipal department, board, bureau, commission or agency as it may require and as may be available to it for its purposes.

f. The task force may meet and hold hearings at the places it designates during the sessions or recesses of the Legislature.

g. The Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department of Human Services shall provide staff support to the task force.

3. The task force shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), along with any legislative bills that it desires to recommend for adoption by the Legislature, no later than 12 months after the initial meeting of the task force. The report shall contain the comprehensive plan provided for in section 2 of this act.

4. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire upon the issuance of the task force report.

Approved September 12, 2007.