

CHAPTER 80

AN ACT establishing an autism and intellectual and other developmental disabilities awareness program and supplementing Titles 26 and 52 of the Revised Statutes.

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

C.26:2-189 Findings, declarations relative to autism, intellectual developmental disabilities awareness for first responders.

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. Autism is a developmental disorder of brain function which is typically manifested in impaired social interaction, problems with verbal and nonverbal communication and imagination, and unusual or severely limited activities and interests. These symptoms generally appear during the first three years of childhood and continue throughout life.

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;

b. In addition to those diagnosed with autism every year, there are an estimated 4.5 million individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities living in the United States, including approximately 200,000 individuals in New Jersey.

Developmental disabilities are a diverse group of severe chronic conditions that are due to mental or physical impairments which are manifested in problems with major life activities such as language, mobility, learning, self-help, and independent living. Developmental disabilities begin anytime during development up to 22 years of age and usually last throughout a person's lifetime.

Intellectual disability is characterized both by a significantly below-average score on a test of mental ability or intelligence and by limitations in the ability to function in areas of daily life, such as communication, self-care, and getting along in social situations and school activities. Intellectual disability is sometimes referred to as a cognitive disability or mental retardation. Intellectual disabilities include, but are not limited to, Down syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, fragile X syndrome, Cri-du-chat syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, as well as infections such as congenital cytomegalovirus or birth defects that affect the brain such as hydrocephalus or cortical atrophy. Other causes of intellectual disability include serious head injury, stroke or certain infections such as meningitis; and

c. Firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and police officers may unexpectedly encounter or be asked to locate a person diagnosed with autism or an intellectual or other developmental disability. Given the high number of individuals affected by these disabilities, it is altogether fitting and proper to ensure that emergency responders are uniformly trained in recognizing the behavioral symptoms and characteristics of a child or adult with one or more of these disabilities, and are educated in the high risks associated with these disabilities as well as basic response techniques.

C.26:2-190 Development of training curriculum; rules, regulations.

2. a. The Commissioner of Health and Senior Services and the Commissioner of Human Services, in consultation with the New Jersey Fire and Emergency Medical Services Institute and the New Jersey State First Aid Council, shall develop a training curriculum with the purpose of informing emergency responders of the risks associated with autism or an intellectual or other developmental disability, as well as providing instruction in appropriate recognition and response techniques concerning these disabilities. The curriculum shall be incorporated into existing time requirements for training and continuing education of

emergency responders.

b. Prior to certification by the Department of Health and Senior Services, each emergency medical technician trained in basic life support services as defined in section 1 of P.L.1985, c.351 (C.26:2K-21) shall be required to satisfactorily complete the training developed under subsection a. of this section. Every emergency medical technician certified prior to the effective date of this act shall, within 36 months of the effective date of this act, satisfactorily complete the training in recognition and response techniques concerning these disabilities, through existing continuing education requirements.

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

C.52:27D-25jj Adoption of training course by Division of Fire Safety.

3. a. The Division of Fire Safety in the Department of Community Affairs, in consultation with the New Jersey Fire and Emergency Medical Services Institute, shall adopt a training course regarding the risks associated with autism or an intellectual or other developmental disability and appropriate recognition and response techniques concerning these disabilities, based on the curriculum developed by the Departments of Health and Senior Services and Human Services pursuant to subsection a. of section 2 of P.L.2008, c.80 (C.26:2-190). The course curriculum and instruction shall be administered to every firefighter recruit, volunteer or paid.

b. Each person, volunteer or paid, who is engaged in fire suppression, firefighting, or fire rescue before the effective date of this act shall, within 36 months of the effective date of this act, satisfactorily complete a training course in recognition and response techniques concerning these disabilities.

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

C.52:17B-71.9 Adoption of training course by Police Training commission.

4. a. The Police Training Commission in the Department of Law and Public Safety shall adopt a training course regarding the risks associated with autism or an intellectual or other developmental disability and appropriate recognition and response techniques concerning these disabilities based on the curriculum developed by the Departments of Health and Senior Services and Human Services pursuant to subsection a. of section 2 of P.L.2008, c.80 (C.26:2-190). The training course shall be administered by the employing agency as part of the in-service training provided to each local police officer in each law enforcement unit operating in this State.

b. Prior to being appointed to permanent status as a local police officer in a law enforcement unit, an individual shall be required to complete the training course adopted under subsection a. of this section. Every local police officer appointed prior to the effective date of this act shall, within 36 months of the effective date of this act, satisfactorily complete a training course in recognition and response techniques concerning these disabilities.

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

5. This act shall take effect on the first day of the seventh month following enactment.

Approved September 9, 2008.