

## CHAPTER 48

AN ACT establishing the New Jersey Epilepsy 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. Epilepsy is the medical term used to describe a pattern of recurring seizures where an individual has no way of controlling bodily functions or unusual behavior;
  - b. About 2.7 million Americans have epilepsy, with 30% of that population being children under the age of 18; one in 10 people will have a seizure in their lifetime, and this year another 200,000 people in the U.S. will be diagnosed with epilepsy;
  - c. According to the Epilepsy Foundation of New Jersey, epilepsy is more common than cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, and Parkinson's disease combined;
  - d. Epilepsy can strike anyone at anytime, and in 70% of all cases, no known cause exists; and although modern treatment methods can achieve full or partial control of seizures in 85% of all cases, some seizure disorders are resistant to current therapies;
  - e. According to the Epilepsy Foundation of New Jersey, epilepsy is prevalent among persons with other disabilities, such as autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and intellectual disabilities; 40% of people who have both cerebral palsy and intellectual disabilities, also have epilepsy;
  - f. There is a strong association between epilepsy and depression. More than one of every three persons with epilepsy are also affected by depression, and persons with a history of depression are three to seven times more likely to develop epilepsy than persons who do not have a history of depression;
  - g. The public often perceives epileptic seizures as signs of intellectual disability, mental illness, and dangerous aggression. Because of this public perception, there is a 30% unemployment rate in adults with the disorder, who are physically able to work; nationally, epilepsy results in an estimated annual cost of \$15.5 billion in medical costs and lost or reduced earnings and production;
  - h. To improve the quality of life for those living with seizure disorders, the Epilepsy Foundation of America recognizes the need for more research to discover the causes of epilepsy, to improve diagnostic strategies, and to develop new drugs; and
  - i. Therefore, it is in the public interest for the State to establish an Epilepsy Task Force to enhance public and professional awareness about this disorder.

2. a. There is established the New Jersey Epilepsy Task Force in the Department of Health and Senior Services.

The purpose of the task force shall be to:

(1) develop recommendations to educate the public and health care professionals about screening, diagnosis, and treatment of epilepsy and its complications; and

(2) develop recommendations to address psychosocial issues faced by persons with epilepsy, such as, depression, stigmatization, and discrimination.

b. The task force shall consist of 13 members as follows:

(1) the Commissioners of Health and Senior Services and Human Services, or their designees, who shall serve *ex officio*; and

(2) 11 public members, who shall be appointed by the Governor as follows: two neurologists licensed to practice medicine in this State, one of whom specializes in pediatric neurology; one person upon the recommendation of the Epilepsy Foundation of New Jersey; two persons who represent agencies that provide services to persons with epilepsy in this

State; one school nurse; two persons who have epilepsy; one parent of a person who has epilepsy; one member of the public with a demonstrated expertise in issues relating to the work of the task force; and one consultant pharmacist. No public member of the task force shall be associated, directly or indirectly, with any pharmaceutical manufacturer.

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

c. The task force shall organize within 120 days following the appointment of a majority of its members and shall select a chairperson and 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 as it deems appropriate.

g. The Department of Health and Senior 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.

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

Approved July 29, 2010.