

Community Development Block Grant

Access To HealthCare Network (AHN) is proposing to assist 307 Las Vegas residences 62 and older with the following Integrated health support:

- Case Management
- Medical Nutrition Therapy
- Health Education Classes
- Chronic Diseases Self-Management Classes
- Food Box delivery service
- Cooking Classes and group nutrition classes
- Seed for Supper Classes

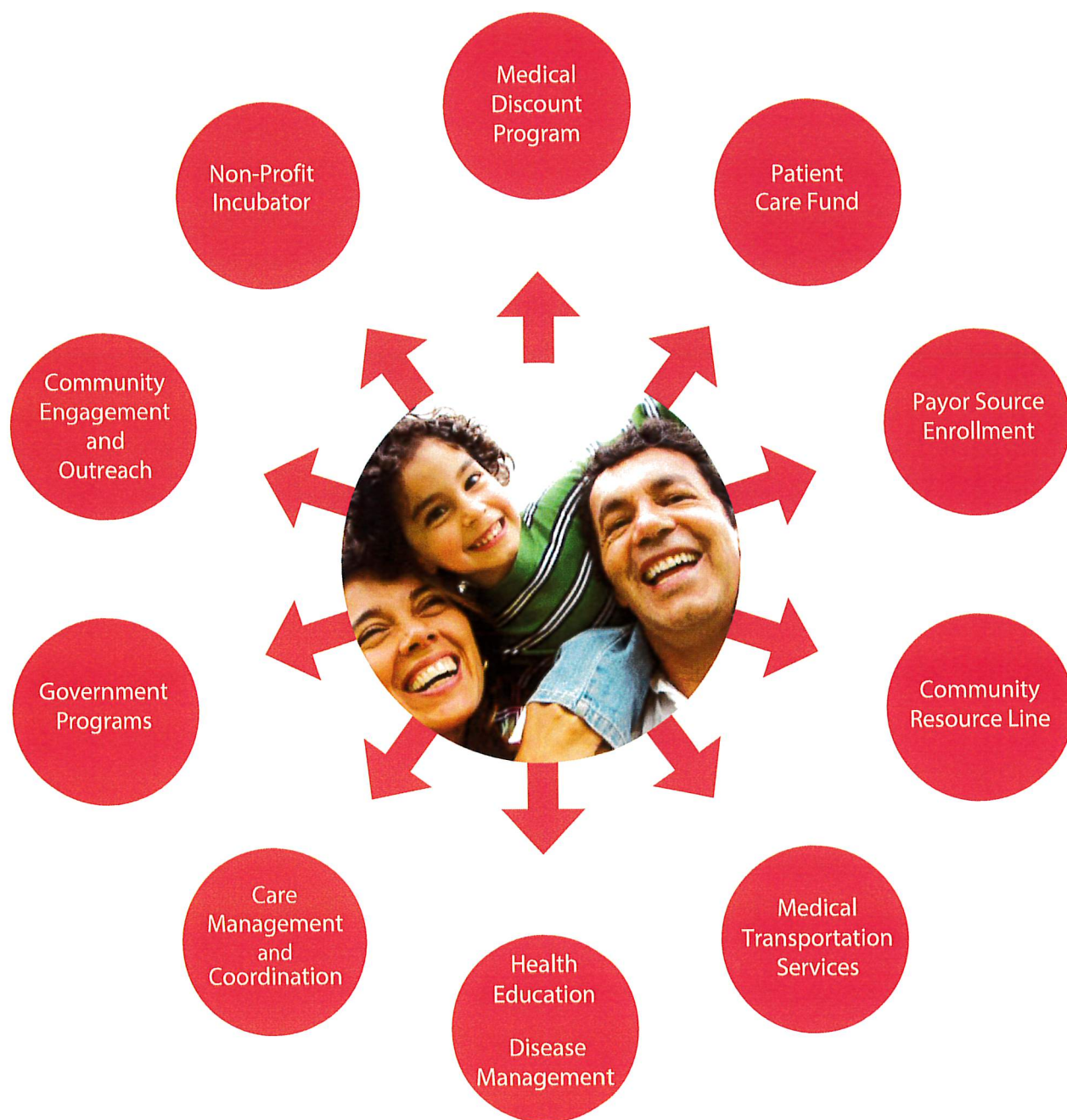
Submitted At Meeting

Date 2/16/11 Item 8

by Jennifer Vazquez



A statewide non-profit serving over 25,000 Nevadans each year. We are a positive force for change and empower the health of our communities one person, one family, and one partnership at a time.



Trevor Rice, CEO | Access to Healthcare Network
E: Trevor@ahnnv.org | P: 775.284.1885 | C: 775.830.0420



HOPE HOME

(HELP, OPPORTUNITIES, PURPOSE AND EMPOWERMENT)

OUR MISSION

For over 57 years, St. Jude's Ranch for Children has been creating pathways to hope and healing for child victims of physical & sexual abuse, exploitation and homelessness. Our programs include:

- Therapeutic Foster Care Services (ages 0-18)-Residential campus in Boulder City, Pregnant & Parenting teen home & sibling reunification program. House parent model, clinical and education support.
- Housing and Community Support (ages 18-24) supportive housing for unhoused transition aged youth. 150 apartment units across the Las Vegas valley.
- Child victims of sex trafficking-Healing Center-new residential campus under construction and will open October 2024.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

- HOPE home exists in response to a growing need for alternative and specialized services for teen girls at high risk to include confirmed CSEC, at high risk for CSEC or those in need of a higher level of care for stabilization and assessment.
- HOPE Home will provide survivor-focused residential services that will be complemented with high quality clinical services. Child survivors will be assisted in learning how to make healthy life choices for themselves that increase their personal safety, emotional stability, hope and healing.
- The HOPE Home will have highly trained and qualified staff that understands the trauma these young people have endured and the importance of being strengths and relationship based in day-to-day interactions.

PROGRAM STATEMENT

Submitted At Meeting

Date 2/2/24 Item 8
by Christina

- HOPE home's mission is to provide a safe and nurturing home for child survivors of sex trafficking, where they can heal from their trauma and receive the support and resources, they need to rebuild their lives.
- We are committed to empowering these children to become strong, resilient, and self-sufficient individuals who can thrive in their communities. Through our comprehensive residential program, we aim to break the cycle of exploitation and create a brighter future for each child we serve.



MODEL OF CARE

Our residential program for child survivors of sex trafficking is designed to be trauma-informed and victim-centered, with a focus on providing a safe and supportive environment for each child to heal and recover. Our model of care is based on the following principles:

- Safety and Security
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Individualized Treatment
- Holistic Approach
- Empowerment
- Community-Based

A grant from the City of Las Vegas will allow us to serve more children in need with intake, placement stability and discharge services.

Thank
you!

Questions: Christina Vela, CEO

cvela@stjudesranch.org

702-296-4954





FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

DURANGO HILLS YMCA EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDING BOARD PRESENTATION
LAS VEGAS CITY HALL

February 12, 2024



ABOUT THE Y

- 180 year heritage nationally, 80 years in Southern Nevada.
- Focus on vulnerable populations, ensuring everyone has access to needed services regardless of age, income, background, or ability.
- Responds in real-time to local issues.
 - Recently: Access to high-quality, affordable early learning



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Submitted At Meeting

Date *2/6/24* Item *8* 1
by *Erica Stegall, YMCA*

AN URGENT ISSUE

- A child's brain is 90% developed by kindergarten.
- Children that lack high-quality early childhood education are:
 - 64% more like to spend time in juvenile detention
 - 67% more likely to be arrested in early adulthood
 - 82% more likely to need public housing
- 76% of Nevadans can't access care.
- Nevada consistently ranks:
 - Worst 25 states for poverty
 - Worst 10 states for education
 - Top 5 states for violent crime



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PROGRAM BENEFITS

- One of the strongest evidence-based early learning curricula in U.S.
- 35-year longitudinal study
 - Higher IQ & school test scores
 - More motivated & engaged in school
 - Less likely to drop out of high school, be arrested, or need welfare
 - 14% higher earnings
 - 5x more likely to own a home
- Documented ROI: \$1.6M back into the Las Vegas economy from a \$104,500 grant



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GRANT HISTORY AND FUTURE

- Current CDBG
 - Years 1-4:
 - Goal: 40 served
 - Actual: 78 served (95% over goal)
- Renewal Application
 - Sustain full-day CDBG seats and add 5 more
 - Combat inflation and rising labor costs
 - Support Valley-wide growth plan
 - Grant supports: teachers, supplies, financial assistance
 - YMCA supports: administrative overhead & youth from waitlist in excess of new participant goal

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THANK YOU!

Erica Stegall
 Executive Director of Childcare
 YMCA of Southern Nevada
 702 877 7249
estegall@lasvegasyymca.org



DESERT SPRING

Community Resource Center

OUR COMMUNITY IMPACT

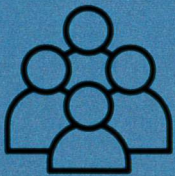
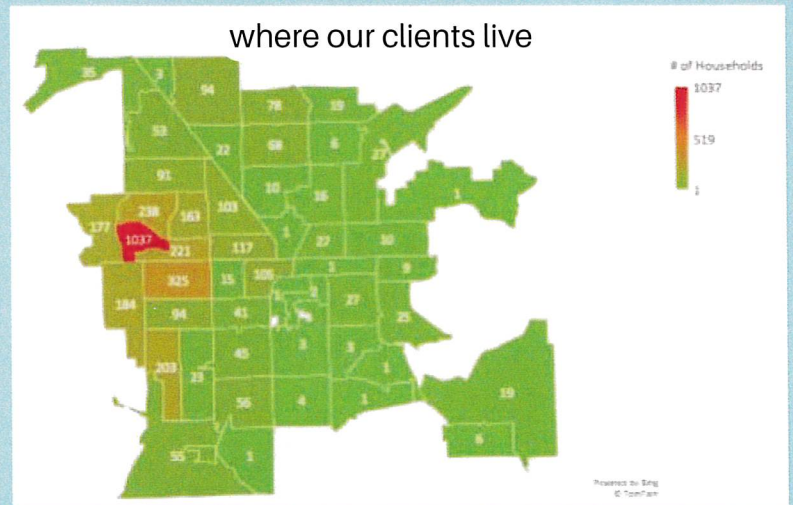
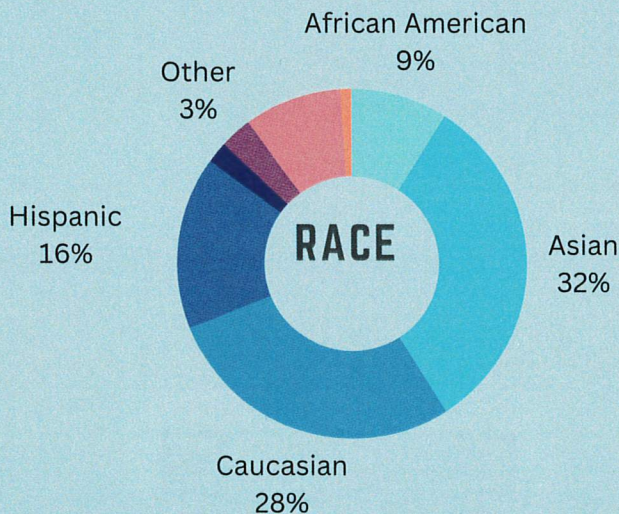
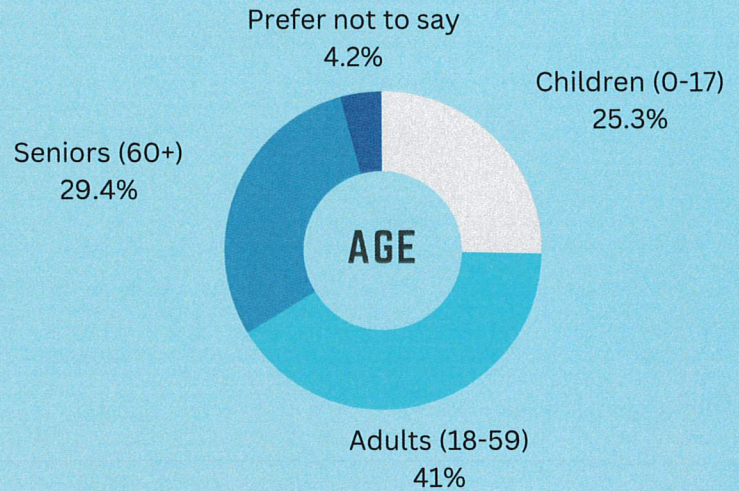
61% HOUSEHOLDS WITH SENIORS

45% HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

36% HOUSEHOLDS WITH SENIORS & CHILDREN

4 PEOPLE AVERAGE FAMILY SIZE

46% CLIENTS LIVING IN A SUMMERLIN ZIP CODE



**30,992
PEOPLE
SERVED**



**353,235
MEALS
SERVED**



**423,883
POUNDS OF
FOOD
DISTRIBUTED**



**4,580
VOLUNTEER
HOURS**

all data is based on 14,122 assistance records from July 2022 to July 2023



120 N Pavilion Center Dr Las Vegas, NV 89144



www.dsccr.org



702-704-5164



info@dsccr.org

Submitted At Meeting

Date 2/16/24 Item 8

by Rae Luthrop,
Desert Spring



DESERT SPRING

Community Resource Center

Our mission is to provide diverse community-based programs and services that enable underserved individuals and families in need to thrive.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Work directly with neighbors as they pick up food.
Have fun with other enthusiastic volunteers

PANTRY

Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs
shifts in the morning and evening.
At least 3 hours per shift, times
vary. Great opportunity to meet
new people, volunteer with a small
group of friends or your family

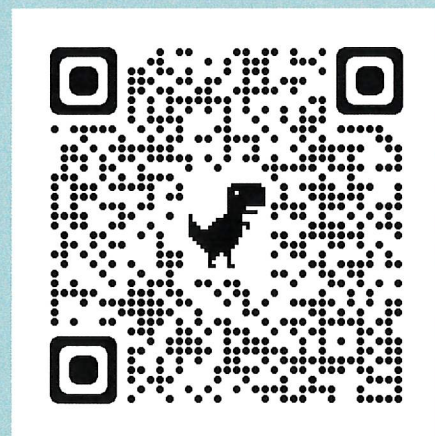
DRIVE-THRU DISTRIBUTIONS

Every 2nd and 4th Saturday from
6:30 AM to 8:30 AM
Expect to be on your feet outside,
so wear comfy, closed-toed shoes
and bring a hat. Great for larger
groups.

PICK UP FOOD DURING THE WEEK

- Monday pick-up discounted milk to stock the pantry all week
- Thursdays pick-up of donated bread for pantry and Saturdays
- Daily pick-up of fresh food from Albertsons between 8-9AM
- As available, weekday pick-up of items from Three Square Food Bank

REGISTER FOR OUR VOLUNTEER DATABASE



Youth under 18 are welcome to join, but must be signed in by a parent or guardian. Youth under 15 must be accompanied by their parent or guardian. At this time, we can not host children under 10 years old.



120 N Pavilion Center Dr Las Vegas, NV 89144



www.dscrc.org



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AUsome Beginnings



Paths Forward



Aspects for Behavior

1

Paths Forward

1. Mission and History

- a. Nonprofit agency, established in 2021 with a mission to provide therapeutic interventions and compassionate services, treating families and individuals that are underserved, and in need.
- b. Low barrier access to services
- c. Mission has always been to be a bridge and linkage between mental health and behavioral health and ensuring families receive services uniquely tailored to their circumstances.
- d. Services: Therapy, Case management, Employment and housing services, Parent skills training, school age and teen groups

2. Our Partnerships

- a. ASPECTS for Behavior
- b. Department of Family Services
- c. Providers for:
 - i. Department of Juvenile Justice Services
 - ii. Department of Family Services
 - iii. Clark County School District
 - iv. The Harbor

2

Submitted At Meeting

Date: 2/6/24 Item 8
by Tamila Riley

1

Paths Forward

1. Needs we discovered

- Undiagnosed children and youth who developed difficult behaviors
- Parents and caregivers needing education and trainings to address new diagnosis
- Parents and caregivers struggling to keep children out of psychiatric hospitals due to the miseducation and lack of early intervention to address their children's developmental delays
- Higher suicidal ideation rates within the psych and outpatient mental health agencies
- Parents struggling to get into appointments for diagnosing after initial discovery of possible of delay
- Insurance barriers to services provisions

1. Partnership with Aspects for Behavior

- For the past 2 fiscal years we have partnered to provide trainings to parents, caregivers and service providers who care for children who exhibit difficult behaviors.
- Trainings are provided by a licensed Board Certified Behavior Analyst who guides the trainees in identification, behavior modification and service navigations to address the difficult behavior
- This partnership has allowed for various populations of people dealing with high intensity behavior to receive much needed training on behavior management and behavior modification. This includes: Child Haven staff, foster parents and fictive kin

3

1) What is Autism

- a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain.
- Children with ASD often behave, communicate, interact, and learn in ways that are different from most other people.
- Signs and symptoms appear before age of 3.
- Diagnosis can only be performed by a team of specialist and must include: a developmental pediatrician, a child psychiatrist, or a child psychologist

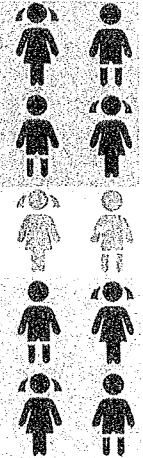
2) Increasing prevalence

- The prevalence of ASD has increased 317% since early 2000s.
- Start of tracking through the CDC it was 1 in every 150 now it is 1 in every 36 children have ASD.
- 22% increase in a 2 year span from 2021-2023

**Fewer than half (42%)
of children with ASD received a developmental
evaluation by 3 years of age.**

**19% of children with ASD
received developmental evaluations
between 3 and 4 years of age.**

**39% of children with ASD
received developmental evaluations
after 4 years of age.**



4

Impact on our community

- The unemployment rate among adults with autism is significantly higher compared to the general population. It is estimated that only about 20% of adults with autism are employed.
- Currently, over 20,000 children each year leave the state for their medical care. Autism is a primary example of the underserved need in Nevada. Autism patients must wait a minimum of 9 months for an initial diagnostic evaluation. Most of these patients are children.

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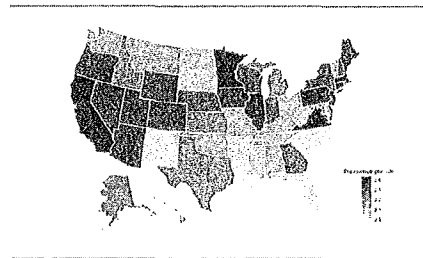


Fig. 1

Estimated autism spectrum disorder prevalence
among adults 18–84 years by state, 2017

6

Why the wait?**1. Need for diagnosis to access services**

- a. A neuropsychology evaluation typically takes 6-15 hours to complete, often over the course of several days.
- b. An inherent delay in early intervention
- c. Reduced access to services that require insurance and or out of pocket payments
- d. Insurance coverage barriers
 - i. Insurance won't cover specialties, supportive services and resources needed to improve daily functioning AND quality of life

1. Impact of early intervention services

- a. Between birth and 7 years children's brain development is still forming to which early intervention has a better chance of long term effectiveness
- b. Early intervention includes: Behavioral Analysis, Family training, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Nutrition Services
- c. Goal is to reduce symptoms that interfere with daily functioning and quality of life.

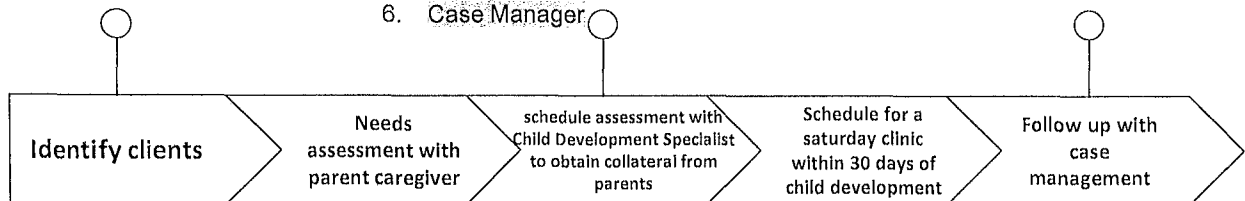
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Plan and Purpose**Key Players that will be involved:**

1. Clinical Director
2. Provider (a developmental pediatrician, a child psychiatrist, or a child psychologist)
3. Board Certified Behavioral Analyst
4. Child Development Specialist
5. Therapist
6. Case Manager

Time frame from start to finish for diagnosis:

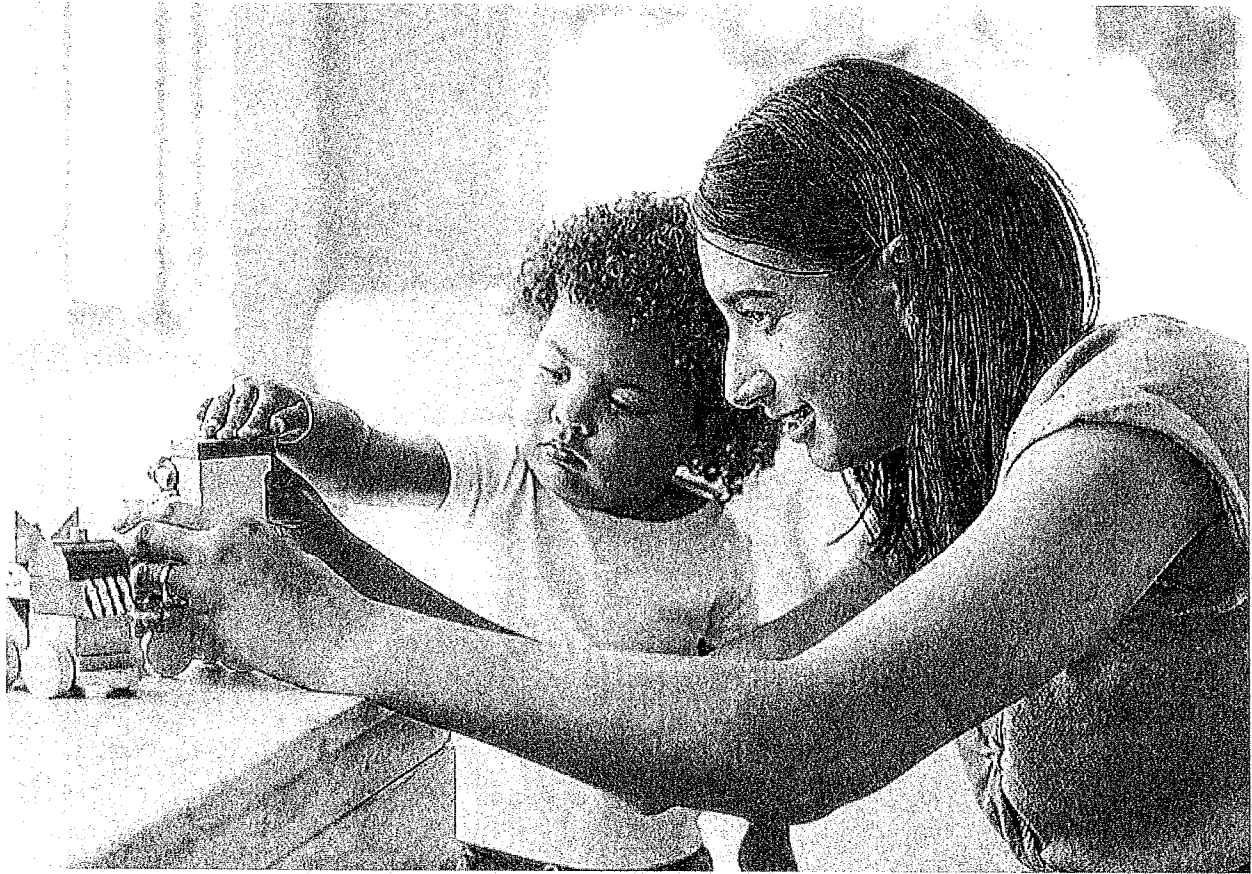
30 days

**Goals:**

1. Assess and provide diagnosis to 80-100 clients awaiting diagnosis
2. Provide needs assessments to 80-100 clients
3. Provide therapeutic intervention 50 individuals and families

8

Early Intervention and Why it is Critical for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) affects 1 in 44 children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). **Early diagnosis of autism** can help children receive timely intervention, develop skills, manage sensory experiences, and behaviors, leading to improved quality of life both now and in the future. Early intervention can make a significant difference in the child's life, as research shows that accessing early intervention for autism is more likely to result in positive outcomes in the future than starting intervention later in childhood or adulthood. One of the effective therapies that can help children with ASD is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy.

When Can Autism be Diagnosed?

The earlier the diagnosis, the sooner the child can access intervention, and the greater the opportunity for developing skills and managing sensory experiences and behaviors. While professionals can reliably diagnose autism at the age of two years old and older, they can suspect autism under the age of two. Some children may start regressing in certain areas after the age of two, such as not responding to their name

or making eye contact. This is when parents should get them evaluated for ASD as soon as possible.

What Does Early Intervention for Autism Mean?

Early intervention for autism means providing therapeutic services to a child with ASD, typically starting as early as two or three years old. During these early years, the brain is still rapidly developing, which is why early intervention is key to a child's development and functioning later in life. Early intervention can address things like speech and communication, **social skills**, gross and fine motor skills, self-care, independence, and more. ABA therapy is one of the most used interventions for children with ASD.

Outcomes of Early Intervention in Children with Autism



Early intervention makes it more likely that a child with ASD will experience positive outcomes during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. While ASD doesn't go away,

some children who receive early intervention will make so much progress that their autism symptoms and behavioral issues are drastically improved by middle to late childhood. The goal of autism intervention is to help the child live their own unique best life. Early intervention can help children become verbal, learn how to advocate for themselves, make friends, and develop independence and self-care skills.

Evidence for Early Intervention in Autism Treatment

Several studies have shown the effectiveness of early intervention for young children with autism. For example, the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM), an intensive early intervention program that combines ABA and developmental psychology, showed positive outcomes for children under two-and-a-half years old. The program uses play-based activities to help children learn new skills and improve their development. The children in the study received 20 hours per week of therapy and **parent training** to help parents and caregivers learn strategies they can use with their children outside of therapy sessions.

Studies have also shown that children who receive early intervention services have better outcomes in communication, socialization, and behavior than those who do not receive intervention. In fact, some studies have shown that early intervention can improve a child's IQ by an average of 17 points.

Early intervention can also help children with autism develop coping skills and strategies to better manage their symptoms. For example, they may learn how to handle sensory overload or how to communicate their needs effectively. This can lead to improved socialization and better relationships with family and peers.

Early intervention can have long-term benefits. Research has found that children who receive early intervention are more likely to attend regular education classes and have higher rates of employment in adulthood. They are also less likely to require support services later in life.

Importance of Early Intervention in Autism Treatment

In conclusion, early intervention can have a significant impact on the lives of children with autism. It can improve their overall development, help them develop coping skills and strategies, and have long-term benefits that extend into adulthood. Therefore, it is crucial for parents and caregivers to seek early intervention services for children with autism.

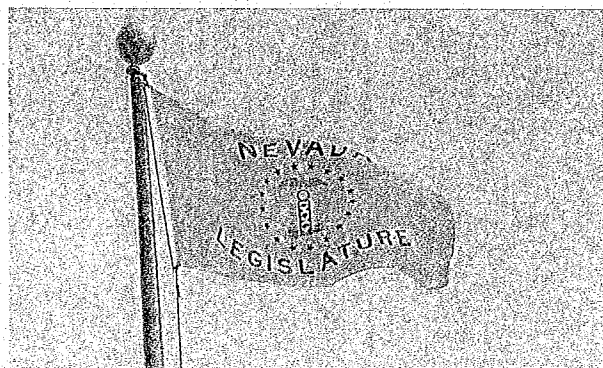
ABA is a scientifically validated approach that focuses on breaking down complex skills into smaller, more manageable steps and reinforcing positive behavior with rewards. This approach can be tailored to meet the unique needs of each child. If you are interested in learning more about early intervention for autism, **contact us**. Our team of experts provides evidence-based interventions that help children with autism reach their full potential.

More needs to be done for autism care



Vladimir Kogan December 11th, 2023 at 2:00 AM

Opinion



The Nevada Legislature flag flies outside of the building on March 2, 2023 in Carson City. (David Calvert/The Nevada Independent)

In the wake of Nevada's groundbreaking Senate Bill 191, a new chapter in autism care is beginning. This landmark legislation extends social support benefits for adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), laying the groundwork for lifelong autism support.

While SB191 raises the age limit for Medicaid coverage of applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy, recognizing the ongoing nature of autism, questions remain about the scope of its impact. What additional policies can ensure that individuals with ASD receive adequate, evidence-based support throughout their lives, and how can these policies be structured and funded to meet their needs?

Analyzing the costs for additional autism services and consideration of funding reveals an intricate economic landscape, reflecting the extensive impact of autism across various sectors such as health care, education and family incomes. The annual cost of autism services in the U.S. was \$268 billion in 2015, and is expected to increase to \$461 billion by 2025, with adult autism services between \$175 billion and \$196 billion annually. Over a lifetime, the cost of supporting a person with autism is approximately \$2.4 million, and \$60,000 to \$240,000 annually for intensive behavioral services.

The provision of services to meet the myriad developing needs of those with ASD is often costly. While expanding additional policies for lifelong support will raise these costs, the economic consequences of not providing adequate support are equally severe. School systems, health care services, therapeutic costs and special education expenses are already substantial.

The harsh economic burden on families, particularly parents of children with autism (costs related to accommodation, respite care and out-of-pocket expenditures), highlights the need for more focused research and policy interventions.

A combination of government funding, private grants, and public-private partnerships could be explored to fund these expanded services. Government funding could be allocated through existing health and social service budgets, increased autism-specific appropriations or reallocation of funds from less effective programs.

Private grants from philanthropic organizations and corporations could support specific initiatives or research projects. Public-private partnerships could leverage private investment to expand and improve services, potentially introducing innovative care models and increasing efficiency.

Ultimately, the investment in comprehensive autism support services will contribute to better health outcomes, increased productivity and a higher quality of life for those with autism, which could offset some of the initial costs in the long term. There are already promising initiatives in the works to support those with ASD:

- The Online and Applied System for Intervention Skills (OASIS) project, part of the Administration for Community Living's intervention research, aims to broaden the reach of OASIS, as well as enhance online training resources and intervention tools that specifically cater to the needs of ASD individuals. By doing so, OASIS aims to empower educators, caregivers and professionals with more effective strategies.
- The Autism Family Caregivers Act (HR2965/S1333) proposes grants for training caregivers in evidence-based skills for caring for children with autism and other developmental disabilities. This act recognizes caregivers' critical role and seeks to enhance their ability to provide high-quality, compassionate care.
- The HEADs-UP Act (HR3380) seeks to enhance access to behavioral, medical and dental care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities by designating them as a medically underserved population. The act also seeks to implement targeted programs and services that address their specific health care needs, reducing disparities and improving overall health outcomes.
- The Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Access Act (HR1493/S762) focuses on ensuring a choice between home care and institutional care for older adults and people with disabilities. The hope is to eliminate HCBS waiting lists and streamline the process for states seeking HCBS waivers.

We can't move ahead without innovative policies backed by rigorous research and guided by the communities these policies are intended to help. Clearly, there is an increasing need for deeper cultural and legislative shifts to implement a systematic approach to providing lifetime care for people with

autism — a sophisticated approach of autism-related benefits that account for the spectrum's ever-changing circumstances.

Shaping a community that appreciates the unique qualities of people with autism should involve providing them with the resources they need to live the life they envision.

Vladimir Kogan is the CEO and founder of the Nevada Autism Center.

The Nevada Independent *welcomes informed, cogent rebuttals to opinion pieces such as this. Send them to submissions@thenvindy.com.*

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Autism Prevalence In Nevada

Around 1 in 54 children get diagnosed with autism in Nevada, and the rates continue to rise.



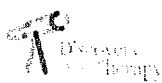
Mark Elias

October 31, 2023

Autism Rates In Nevada

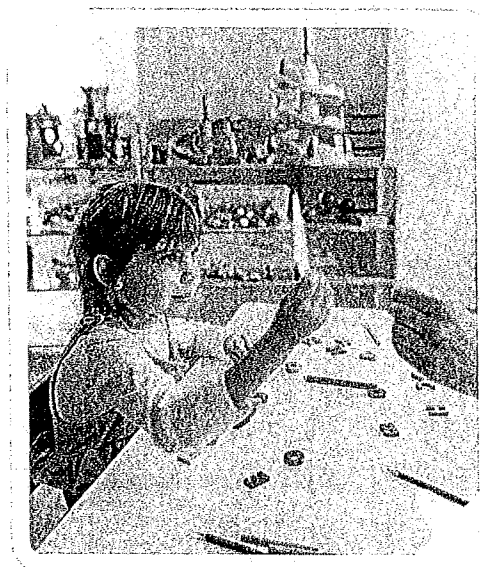
Autism is a developmental disorder that affects communication, social interaction, and behavior. The prevalence of autism in the United States has been on the rise in recent years, with approximately 1 in 54 children being diagnosed with the disorder. In Nevada, the prevalence of autism is also a growing concern.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the prevalence of autism in Nevada is 1 in 58 children. This is slightly higher than the national average and represents a significant increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism in the state over the past decade.



Autism Prevalence In Nevada

discoveryaba.com



There are several factors that may contribute to the higher prevalence of autism in Nevada. One possible explanation is the high rate of premature births in the state. Premature birth is a known risk factor for autism, and

Nevada ranks 48th in the nation for premature births.

Another potential factor is the lack of access to early intervention services. Early intervention is critical for children with autism, as it can improve outcomes and help children reach their full potential. However, many families in Nevada face barriers to accessing these services, such as long waitlists and limited availability in rural areas.

Additionally, there is a shortage of qualified professionals who can diagnose and treat autism in Nevada. This can lead to delays in diagnosis and treatment, which can have a negative impact on a child's development.

Despite these challenges, there are steps being taken to address the issue of autism prevalence in Nevada. For example, the state has implemented a program to increase access to early intervention services for children with autism. Additionally, there are efforts underway to increase the number of trained professionals who can diagnose and treat the disorder.

The Economic Impact of Autism in Nevada

In addition to the personal and social impact of autism, there is also an economic impact to consider. The cost of caring for individuals with autism can be significant, and this cost is often borne by families and caregivers.

According to a report by Autism Speaks, the lifetime cost of caring for an individual with autism can range from \$1.4 million to \$2.4 million dollars. This includes costs associated with direct medical care, as well as indirect costs such as lost productivity and earnings.

In Nevada, the economic impact of autism is particularly significant given the higher prevalence rate compared to other states. Families may face challenges in accessing affordable healthcare services and education programs for their children with autism. Additionally, many parents must reduce work hours or leave their jobs altogether in order to care for their child with autism.

The economic impact of autism extends beyond the individual level as well. Businesses may face increased costs associated with accommodating employees with autism or providing services that cater to individuals with special needs. At the same time, there may be missed opportunities for businesses if they are not able to tap into the skills and abilities of individuals on the autism spectrum.

Given these economic challenges, it is important for policymakers and business leaders in Nevada to prioritize efforts aimed at addressing the needs of individuals with autism and their families. This includes increasing access to healthcare services and education programs, as well as promoting inclusive hiring practices that enable individuals on the spectrum to contribute their unique talents to the workforce.

Summary

In conclusion, the prevalence of autism in Nevada is a growing concern. While there are several contributing factors, including high rates of premature birth and limited access to early intervention services, there are also steps being taken to address the issue.

By increasing awareness and improving access to services, we can help ensure that children with autism in Nevada receive the support they need to reach their full potential.

Find More Articles

LAW

Youth with autism are more likely to be arrested. A Nevada judge wants to remedy that

FEBRUARY 12, 2024 · 5:00 AM ET

By Jaclyn Diaz



Melody and her daughter Angeleena O'Connor, 16, at their home in Las Vegas. Angeleena has autism in addition to anxiety, bipolar disorder and intermittent explosive disorder, among other diagnoses that can cause violent outbursts.

Krystal Ramirez for NPR

Melody O'Connor is grateful her teenage daughter Angeleena O'Connor was arrested in the winter of 2022.

"Isn't that a horrible thing to say?" Melody said.

It wasn't the first time Angeleena had the police called on her. The first time was more than four years earlier — when she was 12.

Angeleena is now 16 and the police have been called to her house more than 40 times over the past four years, including once for a violent incident in which Angeleena grabbed a steak

knife and held it to her mother's face, Melody said.

Angeleena was adopted by Melody as an infant.

"Angeleena is actually my second cousin," Meloday said in early January, speaking from the comfort of her North Las Vegas home over Zoom.

She initially took Angeleena in when she was just 10 months old and then again, permanently, once Angeleena was 2 years old. When she was a toddler, Melody says Angeleena's violent episodes were manageable.





Melody O'Connor says as her daughter has gotten older, her violent episodes have been more difficult to manage.
Krystal Ramirez for NPR

"I could just grab her and restrain her or throw her over my shoulder, carry her out of a store, stuff like that. But now that she's my size, and she's older, she's extremely strong," Melody said.

There's also been an uptick in her violent behavior, including property destruction, threats to their pet dog, Daisy, and suicidal ideations.

"The thing about Angeleena is when she has these episodes, she glazes over, she becomes a different person. She is like Jekyll and Hyde when she flips," Melody said.

Angeleena has autism in addition to anxiety, bipolar disorder and intermittent explosive disorder, among other diagnoses that cause these, at times, violent outbursts, according to Melody.

When she was born, Angeleena had microcephaly, and her brain was smaller than normal, Melody said. She also suffers from frontal lobe epilepsy where her seizures originate and that also contributes to her lack of impulsivity control. A formal autism diagnosis from a psychologist came in 2020.

Before Angeleena's arrest in the winter of 2022, Melody tried several times to get her daughter into hospitals or other treatment facilities but she was always told "No" for a variety of reasons: "They couldn't house her with the older kids because they were afraid she'd become a victim. They couldn't house her with the younger kids because they were afraid that she would hurt them."



SHOTS - HEALTH NEWS

Brain cells, interrupted: How some genes may cause autism, epilepsy and schizophrenia

Or there were long waitlists. Or, they didn't accept their insurance, or they couldn't take her because of her neurological disorder.

"It was always something," Melody said.

The program helps at-risk teen offenders with autism to stay out of the criminal justice system

That is until she heard about a specialty court program near her home called DAAY Court or the detention alternative for autistic youth treatment court. It's based in Las Vegas and not far from Melody's home.

Started by Judge Sunny Bailey in 2018, the Eighth Judicial District's diversion program aims to address the behaviors of at-risk juvenile offenders with autism and to prevent them from entering the revolving door of the criminal justice system as adults.



Judge Sunny Bailey started a program aims to address the behaviors of at-risk juvenile offenders with autism in 2018.

Krystal Ramirez for NPR

Autism is a developmental disability that can cause challenges with social cues, communication and behavior, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The most common charges kids who come into DAAY Court face have to do with battery (usually at home or at school) or sex-related offenses (usually stemming from a lack of understanding of boundaries or proper behavior), according to Chief Deputy District Attorney Summer Clarke.

The court combines the efforts of social workers, therapists, probation officers, defense attorneys and prosecutors to address psychiatric needs, behavioral modification, socialization, and parent training to get to the root causes of the kids coming into Judge Bailey's courtroom.

"We all have to work together because autism is 24 hours a day. School can't fix this, home can't fix it, everyone has to fix it," Bailey said.

It's the first of its kind in the nation and, as of this summer, received recognition from Gov. Joe Lombardo which allows the program to get more funding.

Lombardo's signature on Senate Bill 411 also allowed other jurisdictions across Nevada to create their own DAAY Court Program.

Since its inception, Bailey said 86 children have graduated the program with just six returning so far.

Angeleena is one of those kids who successfully completed DAAY Court.

Her mom, Melody, as well as two mothers of kids who also went through DAAY Court, Amber Ayala and D. Lopez, said it's made a meaningful difference in theirs and their respective child's lives.



Angeleena successfully completed DAAY Court and now Melody has hope for her and her daughter's future.

Krystal Ramirez for NPR

For the first time, Melody has felt hope for her and her daughter's future.

"It was literally going from I'm bawling up in the fetal position in my bedroom at night after she went to bed, crying myself to sleep most days of the week to so many resources, I didn't know what to do with them. And it was so wonderful," Melody said.



LIFE KIT

How "unmasking" leads to freedom for autistic and other neurodivergent people



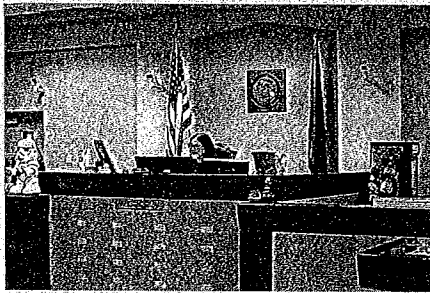
Kids with autism struggle to adapt to adulthood. One doctor is trying to change that

The judge who started it all

The way Judge Bailey tells it, DAAY Court started completely by accident.

She was assigned the case of a child with autism facing a charge for domestic violence against his stepdad.

This was in 2018 and Bailey, the probation officers on this case and others familiar with the intricacies of individuals with autism knew that a crowded, loud, chaotic courtroom would be too much for a child with this diagnosis to handle.



Bailey smiles at a young adult showing progress during DAAY court in Las Vegas.

Kyrstal Ramirez for NPR

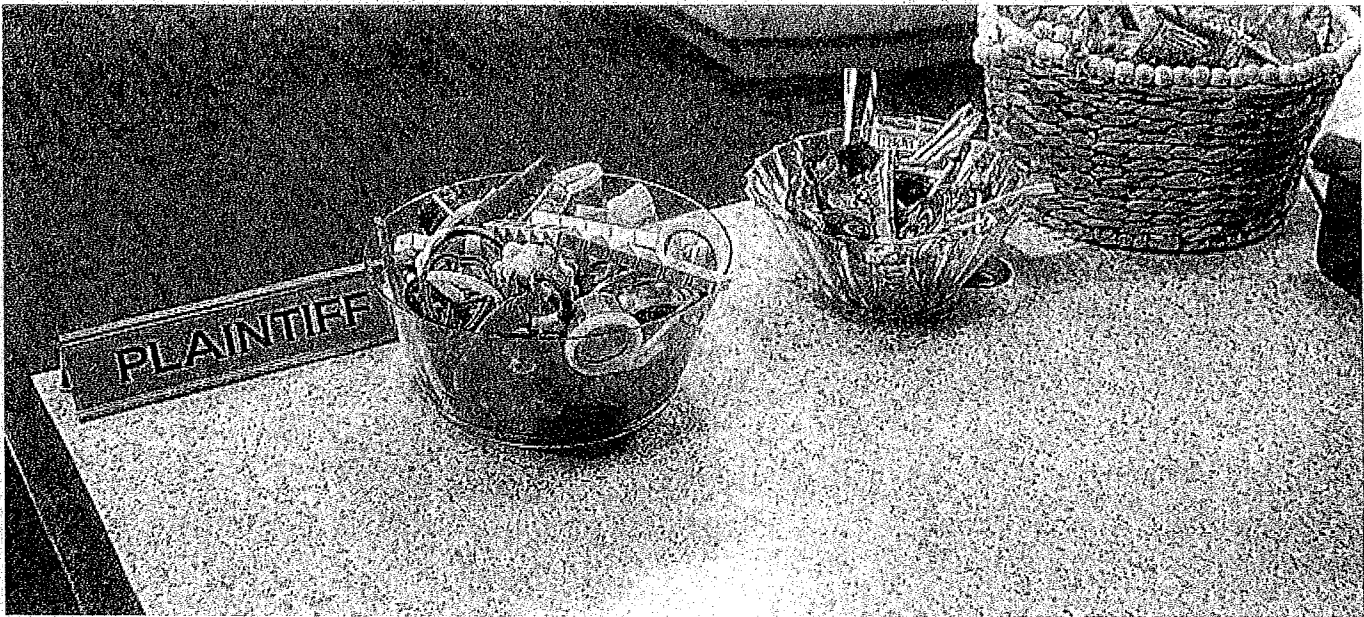
"We were concerned about him being overstimulated," Bailey explained, which is when someone with autism becomes very overwhelmed by their environment, leading to distress and serious anxiety.

So Bailey set his hearing for a quieter Thursday afternoon where this child would be the only one in her courtroom.

Probation officers and other court workers heard about this accommodation and thought it was the start of a new "autism court." Bailey tried to explain it was a one-off but "the next thing you know, they put another kid on the calendar" who also had autism.

Every week it grew. More probation officers, social workers and behavioral specialists heard about this day set aside for autistic youth and began showing up wanting to help, Bailey said.





Fidget toys and snacks are provided for young adults attending court proceedings for DAAY court.

Kyrstal Ramirez for NPR

Soon enough, court administrators gave this once-a-month meeting a name: DAAY Court – Detention Alternative for Autistic Youth, "And that's kind of how we were born," Bailey said.

She said that there has been some interest elsewhere in the state and country for other courts to adopt similar programs, but it has not been formally adopted yet.

So far, it's helped children like Angeleena as well as the children of Amber Ayala and D. Lopez.

Research shows youth with autism come into more frequent contact with police

Lopez said she struggled to know how to help her son, 16, who has autism and who deals with mental health issues. Lopez requested NPR not name him over privacy concerns.

Much like Angeleena, he was arrested for a similar violent outburst. Having police involved in what is normally a mental health issue for her son, terrified Lopez.

"As they get older, they're not seen as a little kid that has autism anymore. They're seen as a danger," Lopez said.



D. Lopez sits with her son at their residence in Las Vegas.

Kyrstal Ramirez for NPR

There have been reports of police officers misunderstanding a person with autism's symptoms or mannerisms, sometimes to deadly consequences.

Some research done by the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute at Drexel University found that youth with autism are coming into contact with law enforcement and the criminal justice system at higher rates as both victims and offenders.

And law enforcement officers are frequently not trained to properly deal with a child with disabilities having an episode, like Ayala's daughter, whom Ayala requested NPR not name out of privacy concerns.

She has autism but much like Lopez's son also deals with mental health issues, Ayala said.

One day, in the middle of one of these episodes, Ayala was trying to get her daughter to a hospital safely. But her daughter was threatening to jump out of the vehicle.

"I actually ended up calling 911," she said. Previously, when she lived in California and this happened, officers would just help her transport her daughter to the hospital. "I thought that would be the same thing here. But because she was violent against me, they arrested her instead."

This was all the more frustrating when Ayala knew her daughter just needed an adjustment in her medications.

"I knew going to jail or to juvie, she wasn't going to get the help she needed," Ayala said.



Amber Ayala stands with her daughter outside their home in Las

Leigh Anne McKingsley, the senior director of disability and justice initiatives for The Arc raised some concerns about DAAY Court as a meaningful solution for helping youth with autism as they come into contact with law enforcement.

The fact that this program was created shows just how crucial the need is for more education

in the U.S. criminal justice system on people with disabilities, she said.

"In the court system, we need folks to understand ADA accommodations and why those are so important," McKingsley said. "In a perfect world, police, prosecutors and judges would be equipped and trained to understand the needs of those with disabilities that come into contact with the criminal justice system."

Beyond that, McKingsley wonders if this idea of DAAY Court could have unintended, negative consequences.

She said that core to the disability rights movement is the goal of creating true societal inclusion, "Sometimes when we try to create a specialty or separate system, it can actually serve to kind of backfire, and have some long-term consequences that can steer us back to institutional thinking, or isolating people with disabilities or other-izing them," McKingsley said.

This can, however, also serve to leave out the greater group of individuals with intellectual disabilities who fall through the cracks when their unique needs are not met in the same way as something like DAAY Court.

"We've got to look at it more holistically. And make sure that we're not alienating a part of the disability community when we're looking at trying to help people," McKingsley said.

**We're
Not
Broken**

LIFE KIT

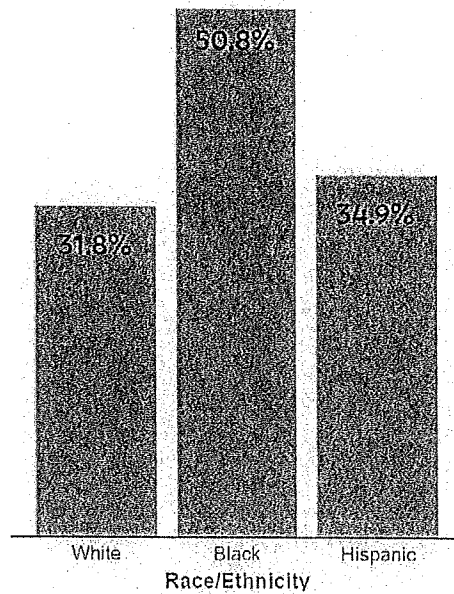
In 'We're Not Broken,' Author Eric Garcia Takes On Myths About Autism

An afternoon in DAAY Court

Bailey, to her credit, has a unique sensitivity to helping youth with autism because of her own experience.



"My eldest child is on the spectrum," Bailey said. Her daughter is now 25, but when she was first diagnosed in 2000 "there weren't any providers."



Nevada has one of the highest prevalence of autism nationwide. In the US, 1 in 36 children have been diagnosed with ASD.

Although progress has been made in the identification of ASD among children of all races and ethnicities, concerns remain around the percentage of Black children identified with ASD who also had ID (50.8% among 8-year-olds). This percentage is higher than for Hispanic (34.9%) or White (31.8%) children and remains consistent with previous reports from the ADDM Network

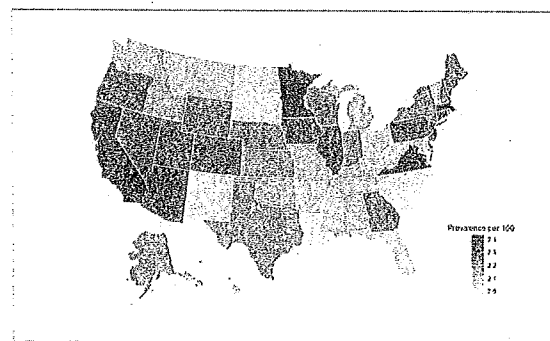


Fig. 1

Estimated autism spectrum disorder prevalence among adults 18–84 years by state, 2017

Fast Forward



Paths Forward

Submitted At Meeting

Date 2/12/2011 Item 8

by Tamara Riley

What is Fast Forward

Fast forward is a program geared towards mentorship, career exploration, skill building and post secondary education for youth aging out of foster care. The goal is to provide early intervention to reduce systemic displacement of youth into the community after they turn 18 years old.

Need for the Program

1. Youths often find themselves transitioning to homelessness after aging out of foster care
2. A myriad of research reflects the connection between youth homelessness and youth pregnancies, incarceration, substance abuse, hospital admissions, mental health crises.
3. Youth often have limited guidance on current opportunities they are afforded
4. Current resources are limited to providing guidance and resources
5. We are ranked at the top of the nation for unaccompanied youth homelessness

Planned Programming

1. Career Exploration with a trained Career Specialist
2. Career Shadowing opportunities
3. Youth Mentorship
4. Skills training (Basic living and social skills) and employment certifications
5. Post-Secondary exploration and guidance (FAFSA Navigation, College Application assistance, and college exploration)

Impact

1. Help youths obtain employment
2. Encourages post-secondary education
3. Provides mentorship and guidance to homeless youths
4. Provides skills for independent living
5. Encourages healthy community integration after aging out
6. Provides access to mental health supports