

1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to regional autism centers; amending s.  
3 1004.55, F.S.; creating an additional regional autism  
4 center in the state; reducing the number of counties  
5 within the service areas of two existing regional autism  
6 centers; providing for consistency in service delivery;  
7 encouraging each constituency board to raise funds;  
8 providing a prohibition; providing an effective date.  
9

10 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

11  
12 Section 1. Subsections (1) through (4) of section 1004.55,  
13 Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

14 1004.55 Regional autism centers.--

15 (1) Seven ~~Six~~ regional autism centers are established to  
16 provide nonresidential resource and training services for  
17 persons of all ages and of all levels of intellectual  
18 functioning who have autism, as defined in s. 393.063; who have  
19 a pervasive developmental disorder that is not otherwise  
20 specified; who have an autistic-like disability; who have a dual  
21 sensory impairment; or who have a sensory impairment with other  
22 handicapping conditions. Each center shall be operationally and  
23 fiscally independent and shall provide services within its  
24 geographical region of the state. Service delivery shall be  
25 consistent for all centers. Each center shall coordinate  
26 services within and between state and local agencies and school  
27 districts but may not duplicate services provided by those

28 agencies or school districts. The respective locations and  
29 service areas of the centers are:

30 (a) The Department of Communication Disorders at Florida  
31 State University, which serves Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Franklin,  
32 Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty,  
33 Madison, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Taylor, Wakulla, Walton, and  
34 Washington Counties.

35 (b) The College of Medicine at the University of Florida,  
36 which serves Alachua, Bradford, Citrus, Columbia, Dixie,  
37 Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hernando, Lafayette, Levy, Marion, Putnam,  
38 Suwannee, and Union Counties.

39 (c) The University of Florida Health Science Center at  
40 Jacksonville, which serves Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau,  
41 and St. Johns Counties.

42 (d) The Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute  
43 at the University of South Florida, which serves Charlotte,  
44 Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands,  
45 Hillsborough, ~~Indian River~~, Lee, Manatee, ~~Martin~~, ~~Okeechobee~~,  
46 Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, ~~St. Lucie~~, and Sarasota Counties.

47 (e) The Mailman Center for Child Development and the  
48 Department of Psychology at the University of Miami, which  
49 serves Broward, Dade, and Monroe, ~~and Palm Beach~~ Counties.

50 (f) The College of Health and Public Affairs at the  
51 University of Central Florida, which serves Brevard, Lake,  
52 Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Sumter, and Volusia Counties.

53 (g) The Department of Exceptional Student Education at  
54 Florida Atlantic University, which serves Palm Beach, Martin,  
55 St. Lucie, Okeechobee, and Indian River Counties.

56 (2) There is established for each center a constituency  
57 board, which shall work collaboratively with the center. Each  
58 board shall consist of no fewer than six members, each of whom  
59 is either an individual who has a disability that is described  
60 in subsection (1) or is a member of a family that includes a  
61 person who has such a disability, who are selected by each  
62 university president from a list that has been developed by the  
63 Autism Society of Florida and other relevant constituency groups  
64 that represent persons who have sensory impairments as described  
65 in subsection (1). As representatives of the center's  
66 constituencies, these boards shall meet quarterly with the staff  
67 of each of the centers to provide advice on policies,  
68 priorities, and activities. Each board shall submit to the  
69 university president and to the Department of Education an  
70 annual report that evaluates the activities and accomplishments  
71 of its center during the year. The board for each center should  
72 raise funds equivalent to 2 percent of the total funds allocated  
73 to that center in each fiscal year.

74 (3) To promote statewide planning and coordination, a  
75 conference must be held annually for staff from each of the  
76 seven ~~five~~ centers and representatives from each center's  
77 constituency board. The purpose of the conference is to  
78 facilitate coordination, networking, cross-training, and  
79 feedback among the staffs and constituency boards of the  
80 centers.

81 (4) (a) Each center shall provide:

82 1. ~~(a)~~ A staff that has expertise in autism and autistic-  
83 like behaviors and in sensory impairments.

84        ~~2.(b)~~ Individual and direct family assistance in the home,  
85 community, and school. A center's assistance should not supplant  
86 other responsibilities of state and local agencies, and each  
87 school district is responsible for providing an appropriate  
88 education program for clients of a center who are school age.

89        ~~3.(e)~~ Technical assistance and consultation services,  
90 including specific intervention and assistance for a client of  
91 the center, the client's family, and the school district, and  
92 any other services that are appropriate.

93        ~~4.(d)~~ Professional training programs that include  
94 developing, providing, and evaluating preservice and inservice  
95 training in state-of-the-art practices for personnel who work  
96 with the populations served by the centers and their families.

97        ~~5.(e)~~ Public education programs to increase awareness of  
98 the public about autism, autistic-related disabilities of  
99 communication and behavior, dual sensory impairments, and  
100 sensory impairments with other handicapping conditions.

101        (b) Direct medical intervention or pharmaceutical  
102 intervention is prohibited in any center on or after July 1,  
103 2008.

104        Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.