

HB 1615

2006

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to autism; providing for autism
3 scholarships for early education and intervention for
4 children with autism spectrum disorders; providing
5 eligibility requirements; providing costs eligible for
6 reimbursement; defining "autism spectrum disorders";
7 providing that Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities
8 (CARD Centers) shall operate as charter schools without
9 certain authorization; providing certain waivers for
10 students attending CARD Center charter schools; providing
11 an effective date.

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13 WHEREAS, many parents of children with autism spectrum
14 disorders are presented with an educational dilemma for their
15 children, and

16 WHEREAS, the educational option with the greatest degree of
17 research support for young children is based on applied behavior
18 analysis and is commonly referred to as early intensive
19 behavioral intervention, and

20 WHEREAS, parents should have the ability to fund
21 appropriate early intensive behavioral intervention in suitable
22 and specially engineered environments and to choose best
23 practices and effective methods for the education of their
24 children with autism spectrum disorders, NOW, THEREFORE,

25
26 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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28 Section 1. Autism scholarships for early education and
29 intervention.--

30 (1) To be eligible for an autism scholarship under this
31 section, a program to provide education and intervention for a
32 child with an autism spectrum disorder must be:

33 (a) Recommended by a pediatric neurologist and
34 psychologist as the most efficacious intervention option for the
35 child. A recommendation made by an Early Steps (Part C Program)
36 Family Support Team for early intensive behavioral intervention
37 for a child who is 3 years of age or younger may serve as the
38 basis of the recommendation for a child who is 4 years of age or
39 older.

40 (b) Planned and regularly supervised by a person who is,
41 at a minimum, a board-certified behavior analyst.

42 (c) Provided in a suitable or specially engineered
43 environment, at a public location, or in a family home with a
44 weekly schedule of educational and therapeutic activities.

45 (2) Autism scholarship funds may be used to reimburse
46 costs for the following:

47 (a) A board-certified behavior analyst for assessment,
48 program planning, staff training and supervision, and parent
49 support and training in early intensive behavioral intervention.

50 (b) A board-certified associate behavior analyst for
51 direct intervention with the child and staff supervision and
52 training.

53 (c) Persons who possess an associate degree, at a minimum,
54 and complete at least 20 hours of training in early intensive
55 behavioral intervention.

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56 (d) Training manuals, books, and teaching and learning
57 materials, including computers, that are essential for
58 establishing and maintaining the home intervention program.

59
60 Parents and other members of the household are not eligible to
61 receive payment for rendering educational or intervention
62 services through autism scholarships under this section.

63 (3) "Autism spectrum disorders" include the specific
64 diagnoses enumerated in the DSM-IV for Pervasive Developmental
65 Disorders. These are:

66 (a) Autism.

67 (b) Asperger Syndrome.

68 (c) Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise
69 Specified (PDD-NOS).

70 (d) Childhood Disintegrative Disorder.

71 (e) Rett's Disorder.

72 (f) Autistic Disorder.

73 Section 2. Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities;
74 charter schools.--

75 (1) Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities, referred
76 to as CARD Centers, seek to provide support and assistance with
77 the goal of optimizing the potential of people with autism, dual
78 sensory impairments, and related disabilities.

79 (2) CARD Centers in the state shall be charter schools
80 without current school district and state authorization.

81 (3) School districts shall waive the 1-year attendance
82 requirement for John M. McKay Scholarships and Florida Education

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83 Finance Program full-time equivalent student funds for those
84 students who choose to attend CARD Center charter schools.

85 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2006.