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California Legislature
Senate Select Committee
on
Autism & Related Disorders



Taskforce on Equity & Diversity for Regional Center Autism Services

Overview of the Taskforce

On April 30, 2012, the Senate Select Committee on Autism & Related Disorders convened an informational hearing entitled "*Ensuring Fair & Equal Access to Regional Center Services for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)*." Testimony by advocates, consumers and their families, academic experts, regional center executive directors, and other stakeholders indicated that inequities exist in providing these services to consumers who are disadvantaged, lacking in education, and/or African Americans, Latinos and other ethnic groups.

During the course of this hearing, there were poignant and compelling discussions as to the potentially adverse consequences that have impacted children, and their families, who were unable to access effective treatments in a timely and appropriate manner. Furthermore, many individuals stressed that these inequities, while possibly unintended, were chronic in nature, exacerbated by our current fiscal crisis, and required immediate attention. A video and transcript of the hearing are available at <http://autism.senate.ca.gov/informationalhearings>.

Therefore, I am establishing, under the auspices of the Senate Select Committee on Autism & Related Disorders, the Senate Select Committee on Autism Taskforce on Equity & Diversity for Regional Center Services. The taskforce will be staffed by Lou Vismara and Concepcion Tadeo.

I will ask the taskforce to provide specific recommendations to ensure that all eligible consumers, and their families, receive services and interventions that are provided in an appropriate, timely and effective manner. In achieving this objective, we must also consider the underlying causes and contributing factors that have resulted in these inequities.

Therefore, I am requesting that the taskforce begin its work with the following plan:

- 1) To identify and review existing statutes, regulations, and prerequisites—as well as the oversight and compliance procedures that are related to Regional Center services for autism spectrum disorders and are intended to ensure that these

services are provided to consumers and their families in a timely, fair and equitable manner.

- 2) To evaluate the methods utilized by Regional Centers to provide eligible consumers and their families with clear, culturally/linguistically appropriate and understandable information about the range of services and treatments that are available to consumers with autism spectrum disorders.
- 3) To provide recommendations for assessment and oversight with regards to the data that is required by Welfare & Institutions Code 4519.5 (i.e. the demographic analysis of the purchase of service expenditures by Regional Centers.)
- 4) To provide performance measures and indicators to evaluate Regional Centers relative to issues of equity/diversity and to develop a process utilizing these metrics/indicators to improve performance and outcomes in Regional Centers where deficiencies exist and improvements needed.
- 5) To identify the best practices on the above issues and the appropriate implementation strategies.

The taskforce will be requested to submit its findings and recommendations to the Senate Select Committee on Autism & Related Disorders by October 1, 2012. I am seeking recommendations that can be implemented succinctly and in a manner that is consistent with our current fiscal crises. Furthermore, I will look to specific benchmarks and outcome measure that will enable us to monitor the efficacy and the beneficial impact of these proposals.

Dr. Lou Vismara and Ms. Concepción Tadeo will be providing you with additional information and timelines on the implementation and timelines of this important project.

Thank you in advance for your participation and contribution to this important endeavor. I look forward to working with you to improve the lives of underserved individuals throughout California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell Steinberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

DARRELL STEINBERG

President pro Tempore