

2009 State Autism Profiles ARKANSAS

DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2000, 766 or 1.23% of children ages 3-21 who received special education services in Arkansas have autism. In 2007-2008, 2,044 or 3.10% of children with disabilities ages 3-21 who received special education services have autism.

Table 1-1: IDEA Part B - Children with Autism in Arkansas for 1999-2000 and 2007-2008
(Child Count by Age Group)

	1999-2000	2007-2008
Age 3-5	95	207
Age 6-11	488	997
Age 12-17	162	763
Age 18-21	21	77
Age 6-21	671	1,837
Age 3-21	766	2,044

Source: Reported by the State of Arkansas in accordance with Section 618 of IDEA to U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs

Table 1-2: IDEA Part B - Children with Disabilities in Arkansas for 1999-2000 and 2007-2008
(Child Count by Age Group)

	1999-2000	2007-2008
Age 3-5	9,376	11,795
Age 6-11	24,158	24,311
Age 12-17	25,959	26,938
Age 18-21	2,729	2,921
Age 6-21	52,846	54,170
Age 3-21	62,222	65,965

Source: Reported by the State of Arkansas in accordance with Section 618 of IDEA to U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs

STATE TASK FORCE

Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism

In April 2007, Governor Mike Beebe signed into law H.B. 2739, creating a statewide legislative task force on autism. Under the law, the Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism met for one year to examine the treatment of autism spectrum disorders, state support systems and services for individuals with autism, and make recommendations to improve treatment methods for autism, funding, and legislative changes. The task force is composed of legislative officials, representatives from state agencies, educators, healthcare providers, members of the public, and other professionals with an interest in autism. Dianna Varady serves as the current chair, and Leslie Henson-Kita serves as the current vice-chair. The task force prepared a final report to the General Assembly by the end of August and adjourned October 1, 2008.

STATE INSURANCE COVERAGE

Arkansas does not have a specific mandate for health insurance coverage for autism. Arkansas passed mental health parity legislation, which requires health insurance coverage and benefits for the treatment of mental illnesses, as defined in the International Classification of Diseases and Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders (*Arkansas Code §23-99-501*).

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MEDICAID

H.B. 2282 was signed into law in 2007 authorizing the Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services to apply for a Medicaid waiver for intensive early intervention individualized therapy, such as behavioral therapies, speech and occupational therapies, for children ages 3 to 10 years diagnosed with a pervasive developmental disorder. The waiver will pay for services up to \$50,000 per year (*Arkansas Code §20-77-124*). The Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services will apply for services when funding becomes available.

EDUCATION

Public education rules were revised, including special education services. The definition of children with disabilities in need of special education was revised under *Arkansas Code §6-41-203* to clarify that a child with a disability must be evaluated as having a disability in accordance with IDEA. Additionally, special education services were expanded to specify that services may include speech-language pathology, travel training and vocational education provided that these services meet requirements.

STATE LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

The Arkansas General Assembly meets in Regular Session for sixty days biennially. The 87th General Assembly convened January 12, 2009 and is expected to adjourn March 20, 2009.

<http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/>

Sponsors of Autism Legislation:

Sen. Mary Anne Salmon (D-North Little Rock) District 27

Rep. David Johnson (D-Little Rock) District 38

Rep. Ray Kidd (D-Jonesboro) District 76