

2016 State Autism Profiles GEORGIA

DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2000, 1,032 or 1.09% of children ages 3-21 who received special education services in Georgia have autism. In 2014-2015, 16,032 or 8.18% of children with disabilities ages 3-21 who received special education services have autism.

Table 1-1: IDEA Part B - Children with Autism in Georgia for 2000-2001 and 2014-2015
(Child Count by Age Group)

	2000-2001	2014-2015
Age 3-5	272	1,101
Age 6-21	1,916	14,931
Age 3-21	2,188	16,032

Source: Reported by the State of Georgia 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 Georgia for 2000-2001 and 2014-2015
(Child Count by Age Group)

	2000-2001	2014-2015
Age 3-5	16,560	17,725
Age 6-11	82,867	84,719
Age 12-17	66,675	83,716
Age 18-21	5,190	9,888
Age 6-21	154,732	178,323
Age 3-21	171,292	196,048

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

STATE TASK FORCE

The State of Georgia does not have an active statewide task force on autism at this time. However, on April 1, 2009, S.R. 672 was adopted, creating the Senate Study Committee on Autism for the purpose of further exploring issues surrounding the availability and affordability of health care insurance covering autism and access to health care services. The committee disbanded December 31, 2009.

<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/display/20092010/SR/672>

STATE INSURANCE COVERAGE

On April 29, 2015, became the 41st state to pass autism insurance legislation. After working for 7 years toward passage of “Ava’s Law” (H.B. 429), coverage for autism spectrum disorders for individuals under the age of 7. The bill requires coverage for medically necessary services for the evaluation, assessment, testing, screening, diagnosing, and treatment of autism spectrum disorders using evidence based practices and includes habilitative and rehabilitative services, counseling, applied behavioral analysis (ABA), and therapies such as physical, occupational, speech-language, and marriage and family therapy. There is no limit on the number of visits, but the policies may limit coverage of ABA to \$30,000 per year. Coverage of treatments will be provided when prescribed, by a licensed physician or a licensed psychologist who determines the care to be medically necessary. The effective date of the statute is July 1, 2015.

<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/display/20152016/HB/429>

Though the effective date of the law is July 15, 2015, H.R. 808 provides that an amendment to the Constitution will be offered to voters in 2016 providing that funds derived from an additional .2 percent increase in the general state sales and use tax shall be used for the treatment of autism spectrum disorder. If the amendment is ratified, the additional tax will raise \$300M to cover treatments for children up to 18 years old. Changes would result in coverage for all children with autism spectrum disorders by expanding the definition and requiring insurers who cover any neurological disorder to include autism spectrum.

<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/display/20152016/HR/808>

2016 State Autism Profiles GEORGIA

In 2016, legislation was introduced in the Senate as S.R.1043 to create a Joint Study Committee on the Expansion of Autism Insurance Mandate to ERISA Plans. The bill did not pass beyond a second reading.

H.B. 565 was signed into law in 2001, which states that group health insurance plans that provide benefits for neurological disorders must provide the same benefits to covered individuals based on the diagnosis of autism. Health benefits, including copayments, exclusions, cost-sharing, limitations as to type and scope of treatment, conditions, schedule of benefits, for individuals with autism are to be provided in accordance with neurological conditions. (*Ga. Code Ann. § 33-24-59.10*)

ESSENTIAL HEALTH BENEFITS

Because Ava's law was not passed at the time of the identification of the state's benchmark plan, Georgia's benchmark plan does not include autism services or applied behavior analysis (ABA) in its Essential Health Benefits package. Their exchange is being run by the federal government. (Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthcare Plan of Georgia, Inc.; POS, HMO Urgent Care 60 Copay)

EDUCATION

Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program

The Georgia Special Needs Scholarship program was established under S.B. 10, which was signed into law by Gov. Sonny Perdue in May 2007. The scholarship program is administered by the Georgia Department of Education, and expands the options for educational settings for students with a disability. Under the scholarship program, parents of an eligible student may opt to send their child to an approved private school or to another public school within or outside of the residential school district if the school accepts the student. Autism is included as a qualifying disability. The maximum amount awarded is the amount of funding the school would have received from the state if the student had attended a school within the residential school district.

<http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Special-Needs-Scholarship-Program.aspx>

STATE LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

The Georgia General Assembly meets in Regular Session on the second Monday in January each year for no more than 40 days. The 2016 session convened on January 11, 2016 and adjourned on March 24, 2016. The 2017 session is expected to convene on January 9, 2017 and is anticipating adjournment in March 2017.

<http://www.legis.state.ga.us/>

Sponsors of Autism Legislation

Sen. Tommie Williams (R-Lyons) District 19

Sen. Vincent Fort (D-Atlanta) District 39

Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford) District 45

Sen. Bill Cowsert (R-Athens) District 46

Sen. David Shafer (R-Duluth) District 48

Sen. Butch Miller (R-Chicamauga) District 49

Sen. John Albers (R-Roswell) District 56

Rep. Katie Dempsey (R-Rome) District 13