

2016 State Autism Profiles RHODE ISLAND

DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2000, 357 or 1.16% of children ages 3-21 who received special education services in Rhode Island have autism. In 2014-2015, 2,248 or 9.62 % of children with disabilities ages 3-21 who received special education services have autism.

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

	2000-2001	2014-2015
Age 3-5	48	183
Age 6-21	309	2,065
Age 3-21	357	2,248

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

	2000-2001	2014-2015
Age 3-5	2,614	2,942
Age 6-11	13,913	9,151
Age 12-17	12,830	9,704
Age 18-21	1,370	1,563
Age 6-21	28,113	20,418
Age 3-21	30,727	23,360

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

STATE TASK FORCE

Joint Commission to Study Autism in the State of Rhode Island

In the 2013 session, the legislature approved the creation of a commission to make a comprehensive study to improve the quality of life and to create positive outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and their families. The commission is an outgrowth of an existing commission that has, for the past several years, studied the education of children with autism. Companion House and Senate bills – ([2013-H.5099A](#)), sponsored by Rep. Peter G. Palumbo (D-Dist. 16, Cranston) and ([2013-S.0239A](#)), sponsored by Sen. Edward J. O’Neill (I-Dist. 17, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield) – create a 23 member commission. The commission, which will report its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly, is to make a comprehensive study to improve the quality of life and create positive outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorders and their families. The new commission was recognition that autism is a condition affecting children and adults and additional study is needed.

<http://sos.ri.gov/govdirectory/index.php?page=DetailDeptAgency&eid=6185>

http://sos.ri.gov/boards/index.php?page=board_detail&board_id=6185

In early 2009, legislation (H. 5691, H.5270, S.170, and S.716) established a Joint Commission to Study the Educational Needs of Children with Autism in Rhode Island. The study focused on diagnosis and assessment, prevalence, impact on family, the role of the family, educational goals, interventions, educational programs, public policy approaches to personnel training and education. The commission consisted of 24 members, including legislative officials, representatives from state agencies, and professionals with an interest in autism. The final report was to be submitted to the General Assembly by January 28, 2010 and was to dissolve by June 15, 2010. Legislation passed in the 2011 session extended the reporting date of the Commission until January 24, 2012, with the commission expiring on June 28, 2012.

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STATE INSURANCE COVERAGE

In 2011, the Rhode Island legislature passed and Governor Lincoln Chafee signed S.B. 107/H.B. 5275, mandating private and state health care plans cover for diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorder. Health plans are required to provide benefits for applied behavior analysis (ABA), speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy and apply until the individual reaches the age of 15. There is a \$32,000 a year limit on ABA. Benefits for occupational therapy and physical therapy are to be the same for all other diseases or disorders covered by the health plan. [R.I. Gen. Laws § 27-20.11-1 et seq. \(2011 R.I. Pub. Laws, Chap. 159, H.B. 5275 and 2011 R.I. Pub. Laws, Chap. 175, S.B. 107\)](#)

In the 2012 session, H.B. 7165 amended the scope of coverage for autism spectrum disorders to include psychology, psychiatry, and pharmaceutical services as covered treatment options, though the services would be to the extent that such services are a covered benefit for other diseases and conditions. It also enables licensed psychologists to provide ABA therapy if they have “equivalent experience.” S.B. 2559, also passed in the 2012 session, creates a five-member Applied Behavior Analyst Licensing Board within the Department of Health. ([2012 R.I. Pub. Laws, Chap. 397](#))

ESSENTIAL HEALTH BENEFITS

Rhode Island’s benchmark plan not only does not include autism services, but it also specifically excludes applied behavior analysis (ABA) from its Mental Health/Behavioral Health Services. This is permissible under the state autism mandate because the mandate only applies to large group markets. (Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island; Vantage Blue)

EDUCATION

Autism Support Center

The Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Special Populations in contract with the Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project has made available the Autism Support Center to serve as a clearinghouse for information and support for educators and parents of students with autism spectrum disorders. Services available include workshops, training, information, resources, best practices, and other pertinent information that support the educational needs of children with autism. <http://www.ritap.org/asd/>

Licensure of Behavior Analysts

H.7152 provided for licensing of behavior analysts and establishment of behavior analysts licensing board, requirements, qualification and practice limits. <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText12/HouseText12/H7152A.pdf>
<http://www.health.ri.gov/licensing/>

OTHER STATE RESOURCES

Rhode Island Evaluation and Treatment Act

The Rhode Island Evaluation and Treatment Act directs the Rhode Island Department of Health to evaluate what methodologies would provide an accurate diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders and to develop a system for maintaining records of diagnoses. (*RI Gen Law §23-79.1*)

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STATE LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

The Rhode Island General Assembly meets annually in Regular Session on the first Tuesday in January. The 2016 Regular Session convened on January 5, 2016 and is expected to adjourn June 30, 2016. The 2017 session is expected to convene on January 3, 2017.

<http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Pages/Default.aspx>

Sponsors of Autism Legislation

Sen. James E. Doyle II (D-Pawtucket) District 8

Sen. Edward O'Neill (I-Lincoln, North Providence,
Pawtucket) District 17

Rep. Eileen S. Naughton (D-Warwick) District 21