

HB 40 -- Autism Spectrum Disorder

Sponsor: Lampe

This bill changes the laws regarding the identification, assessment, and education of children with autism spectrum disorder. In its main provisions, the bill:

(1) Requires the state to provide early intervention services to children with autism under Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, commonly known as the First Steps Program (Section 160.900, RSMo);

(2) Requires course work in teacher training programs to include recognition of the characteristics and special needs of students with disabilities or autism and students who are gifted (Section 161.099);

(3) Adds consideration of children with autism to the duties of state and area advisory committees on special education (Section 162.690);

(4) Extends early childhood special education services to include children up to five years of age (Sections 162.700 and 178.693);

(5) Allows schools to contract for services for children with autism (Section 162.705);

(6) Requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide a comprehensive, easy-to-understand guide regarding the individualized education program process to help parents effectively participate. A notice about the availability of the guide must also be included in student handbooks and on school web sites (Section 162.943);

(7) Requires the Missouri Advisory Council of Certification for Educators within the department to make recommendations on training and professional development regarding best practices for teachers of children with autism (Section 168.015);

(8) Requires the department to appoint an autism ombudsman and to develop best practice guidelines for the educational assessments and interventions for handicapped children from three through five years of age. Each regional professional development center must have an autism specialist available. Early childhood education centers will be established by the department, subject to appropriations, giving priority to regions where there are limited or nonexistent resources and a significant need. Children who are receiving early childhood

services on or after August 1, 2013, will be monitored for educational outcomes until they complete third grade (Section 178.692);

(9) Adds standards for the identification, assessment, and interventions for children with autism to the Parents as Teachers Program (Section 178.695);

(10) Requires the General Assembly to annually appropriate funds to the newly established Missouri Special Needs Identification and Education Program to meet the needs for educating, training, and providing services for public school educators to identify, assess, and provide interventions and educate children with special needs. The bill authorizes a tax credit to a participant for unreimbursed training expenses that exceed the categorical funding. All instructional employees and parent educators for the Parents as Teachers Program must be trained on the early detection of autism by July 1, 2013. Instructional personnel for kindergarten through second grade must complete training by July 1, 2015; and instructional personnel for the remaining grades and school nurses and counselors must complete training by July 1, 2017 (Section 178.696); and

(11) Establishes the Missouri Autism Spectrum Disorder Commission within the Department of Mental Health which must submit to the General Assembly for its review a 10-year strategic plan by December 1, 2012, to address the growing number of persons who need services for autism. The composition of the 20-member commission and the elements of the strategic plan are specified in the bill (Section 633.205).