American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

Colorado Chapter
PO Box 4834
Englewood, CO 80155
303/770-6048
Fax: 303/771-2550

Chapter President
Bruce MacHaffie, MD. FAAP
bruce_machaffie@compuserve.com

Chapter Vice President
Jeffrey Brown, MD, MPH
jeff.brown@dhha.org

Chapter Treasurer
Martha Middlemist, MD, FAAP
middlemist@msn.com

Chapter Secretary
Susan Townsend, MD
sue_townsend@pediatrix.com

Past President
Karen Leamer, MD
kleamer@mac.com

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harvey.bograd@uchsc.edu

Julie Brockway, MD, FAAP
charlesandjulie@hotmail.com

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pedifleming@adelphia.net

Nancy Taoka, MD
nancytaoka@uchsc.edu

Kathryn Wells, MD, FAAP
wells.kathi@tchden.org

Barbara Zind, MD, FAAP
prestonzind@bresnn.net

Executive Director
Carol Goddard
carol@goddardassociates.com

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Present medical evidence supports that autism is a neurological disorder present in some children at birth. However, the symptoms of autism may not be clearly evident until those skills that are most affected by autism, specifically communication and social skills, are prominent enough in typical children to discern a difference. For these reasons, the average age of diagnosis of autism is two years or older.

Evidence that the brain structures, particularly the amygdala and cerebellum, are abnormal on histopathological specimens, and that brain growth, head circumference and gray to white matter ratios are abnormal in children with autism, support the premise that autism is, in fact, a congenital anomaly of the central nervous system.

The Colorado Revised Statutes, Section 10-16-104, Mandatory coverage provisions (1.7) is as follows (emphasis added):

> "**Therapies for congenital defects and birth abnormalities.** (a) After the first thirty-one days of life, policy limitations and exclusions that are generally applicable under the policy may apply: ***except*** that all individual and group health benefit plans shall provide medically necessary physical, occupational, and speech therapy for the care and treatment of ***congenital defects and birth abnormalitie***s for covered children up to five years of age. (b) The level of benefits required in paragraph (a) of this subsection (1.7) shall be the greater of the number of such visits provided under the policy or plan or twenty therapy visits per year each for physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy. Said therapy visits shall be distributed as medically appropriate throughout the yearly term of the policy or yearly term of the enrollee coverage contract, ***without regard to whether the condition is acute or chronic*** and ***without regard to whether the purpose of the therapy is to maintain or improve functional capacity***.

The Colorado Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics supports the current medical evidence and opposes any denial of healthcare benefits on the assumption that autism is not a congenital anomaly, regardless of the age at diagnosis.

Sincerely,

Bruce MacHaffie, M.D.
President Colorado Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics

This letter is accompanied by citations that address this issue.

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