

## House Bill No. 885

An act relating to regional autism centers; amending s. 1004.55, F.S.; creating an additional regional autism center in the state; reducing the number of counties within the service areas of two existing regional autism centers; providing for consistency in service delivery; encouraging each constituency board to raise funds; providing a prohibition; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsections (1) through (4) of section 1004.55, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1004.55 Regional autism centers.—

(1) ~~Seven~~ Six regional autism centers are established to provide nonresidential resource and training services for persons of all ages and of all levels of intellectual functioning who have autism, as defined in s. 393.063; who have a pervasive developmental disorder that is not otherwise specified; who have an autistic-like disability; who have a dual sensory impairment; or who have a sensory impairment with other handicapping conditions. Each center shall be operationally and fiscally independent and shall provide services within its geographical region of the state. Service delivery shall be consistent for all centers. Each center shall coordinate services within and between state and local agencies and school districts but may not duplicate services provided by those agencies or school districts. The respective locations and service areas of the centers are:

(a) The Department of Communication Disorders at Florida State University, which serves Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Taylor, Wakulla, Walton, and Washington Counties.

(b) The College of Medicine at the University of Florida, which serves Alachua, Bradford, Citrus, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hernando, Lafayette, Levy, Marion, Putnam, Suwannee, and Union Counties.

(c) The University of Florida Health Science Center at Jacksonville, which serves Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, and St. Johns Counties.

(d) The Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute at the University of South Florida, which serves Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Hillsborough, ~~Indian River~~, Lee, Manatee, ~~Martin~~, ~~Okeechobee~~, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, ~~St. Lucie~~, and Sarasota Counties.

(e) The Mailman Center for Child Development and the Department of Psychology at the University of Miami, which serves Broward, Dade, and Monroe, ~~and Palm Beach~~ Counties.

(f) The College of Health and Public Affairs at the University of Central Florida, which serves Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Sumter, and Volusia Counties.

(g) The Department of Exceptional Student Education at Florida Atlantic University, which serves Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Okeechobee, and Indian River Counties.

(2) There is established for each center a constituency board, which shall work collaboratively with the center. Each board shall consist of no fewer than six members, each of whom is either an individual who has a disability that is described in subsection (1) or is a member of a family that includes a person who has such a disability, who are selected by each university president from a list that has been developed by the Autism Society of Florida and other relevant constituency groups that represent persons who have sensory impairments as described in subsection (1). As representatives of the center's constituencies, these boards shall meet quarterly with the staff of each of the centers to provide advice on policies, priorities, and activities. Each board shall submit to the university president and to the Department of Education an annual report that evaluates the activities and accomplishments of its center during the year. The board for each center should raise funds equivalent to 2 percent of the total funds allocated to that center in each fiscal year.

(3) To promote statewide planning and coordination, a conference must be held annually for staff from each of the ~~seven~~ five centers and representatives from each center's constituency board. The purpose of the conference is to facilitate coordination, networking, cross-training, and feedback among the staffs and constituency boards of the centers.

(4)(a) Each center shall provide:

1.(a) A staff that has expertise in autism and autistic-like behaviors and in sensory impairments.

2.(b) Individual and direct family assistance in the home, community, and school. A center's assistance should not supplant other responsibilities of state and local agencies, and each school district is responsible for providing an appropriate education program for clients of a center who are school age.

3.(c) Technical assistance and consultation services, including specific intervention and assistance for a client of the center, the client's family, and the school district, and any other services that are appropriate.

4.(d) Professional training programs that include developing, providing, and evaluating preservice and inservice training in state-of-the-art practices for personnel who work with the populations served by the centers and their families.

5.(e) Public education programs to increase awareness of the public about autism, autistic-related disabilities of communication and behavior, dual sensory impairments, and sensory impairments with other handicapping conditions.

(b) Direct medical intervention or pharmaceutical intervention is prohibited in any center on or after July 1, 2008.

Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

Approved by the Governor May 24, 2005.

Filed in Office Secretary of State May 24, 2005.