February, 2016

Re: Insurance Coverage for Autism Treatments and Special Education Services

The past five years have seen a great expansion of access to insurance coverage for autism treatments. The Autism Insurance Resource Center provides information and technical assistance to consumers, educators, providers, employers, and others on issues related to insurance coverage.

We have recently become aware of some confusion regarding the impact of this expansion on school districts. In order to clarify this, we are providing links to two documents:

- MassHealth School-Based Medicaid Provider Bulleting 29, September 2015, re: Expansion of School-Based Medicaid Program to Include Autism Services
- Massachusetts DESE Administrative Advisory SPED 2012-1 The Autism Insurance Law

Please note that, per IDEA, and as explained in the DESE Administrative Advisory, expanded insurance coverage for autism treatments has no effect on districts’ legal obligations under federal and state special education laws to provide FAPE in the least restrictive environment. School districts may not require parents to obtain FAPE-related services outside of school through insurance, and school districts may not unilaterally reduce the level of a service (such as speech therapy or ABA) provided through the IEP because a student receives the same or similar services outside of school.

Our Center is happy to work with Schools to provide information, assistance and training regarding any autism insurance-related issues.