



Grant-A-Gift Autism Foundation Ackerman Center

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Date: March 10, 2022
To: Nevada Children's Commission
From: Colleen Morris, MD, Mario Gaspar de Alba, MD, and Julie Beasley, PhD
GGAFF Ackerman Center Drug Effect Clinic/Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
Multidisciplinary Assessment Team
Re: Facilitation of Access and Participation for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) programs for
Children with a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

THE CONTENTS OF THIS LETTER ARE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL AND ARE NOT TO BE REPRODUCED OR DISEMINATED IN WHOLE OR PART BY ANY MEANS WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN CONSENT OF THE PATIENT/PARENT/GUARDIAN.

- On behalf of the Grant-A-Gift Autism Foundation Ackerman Center Drug Effect/FASD Multidisciplinary Clinic, we appreciate being invited to the Children's Commission.
- We are currently in Year 2 of funding from the Nevada State Opioid Response Grant. With this grant, we have increased our diagnostic clinics to twice monthly, doubling the families we can see each month. We also just completed the Drug Effect/FASD Psychoeducational program for parents/caregivers and their children ages 8-12 years old. We had 5 families complete the 4-week training program with their 6 children in-person, and a few other guardians attend virtually.
- We bring two immediate needs before the Children's Commission:
 - First, the need for ongoing and dedicated funding for our multidisciplinary diagnostic clinics. Multidisciplinary clinics are currently not reimbursed in totality by insurance providers, including Medicaid. The complexity of the children seen in the clinic requires a multidisciplinary approach in order to properly identify and develop treatment plans for children with Prenatal Drug Exposure, a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and the host of potential comorbid diagnoses that further negatively impact behavior and adaptive functioning skills. It is through our diagnostic clinics that we properly identify children with Prenatal Drug Exposure and with a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Since July 1, 2021, through end of February 2022, we have seen 44 children in clinic, ALL with prenatal drug exposure and additional diagnoses that need intervention (e.g., SLD, ADHD, Anxiety, Mood/Behavior Disorders). The majority of these children present with serious adverse childhood experiences including parental drug use, neglect, abuse, abandonment, multiple placements, school disruption, etc.
 - **Additionally, of these 44 children, 27 (61%) were diagnosed with a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (and three more would have been with sufficient prenatal alcohol documentation) – that means that 2/3 of our children with Prenatal Drug Exposure have Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

- Second, is assistance with funding for training community Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Providers (Board Certified Behavior Analysts, Registered Behavior Technicians) in treating children with FASD, as well as Medicaid funding for ABA services for children with a diagnosis of prenatal drug exposure.
 - In the 2019 legislative session, Medicaid approved funding for ABA services with the diagnosis of FASD. This includes both comprehensive programs and targeted skills training.
 - ABA community providers need the training in working with children with FASD and their unique needs to begin to accept these children into their practices.
 - To our knowledge, of the 44 children, only 3 have been able to find community ABA providers and receive funding for those services; all 3 were under the age of 6 years.
 - ABA providers are willing community partners but cite the need for training to expand their practice to children with FASD.
 - ABA services will immediately help parents, children with FASD, schools, and DFS at an intensity that can make a difference.
 - Our kids with FASD are some of the most challenging children “in the system” due to late diagnosis and services that are exceptionally difficult to secure.
- ABA is one answer to the multiple challenges. At the Ackerman Center, in addition to our extensive knowledge of FASD, we specialize in ABA with children with Autism, and can combine those strengths to train our community ABA providers to work with children with FASD for the most positive outcomes. The resources are there – we just need to bring the children and programs together through training.
- Pending availability of funds with the Nevada State Opioid Response Grant, we will apply for additional funding to continue this program for 2022-2023 and will also be reaching out for letters of support in the need for our programs. As you each participate in funding decisions, please include ABA training for FASD, as well as funding through Medicaid for ABA services for those children diagnosed with prenatal drug exposure.



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