



# THE PRAIRIE NEWS

AN INFORMATIONAL NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY THE PRAIRIE CLINIC  
Specializing in Family Mental Health and Developmental Disorders

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## Understanding the New Autism Insurance Coverage Law SB934

(A brief explanation of the law provided by the Autism Society of Illinois)

Autism Spectrum Disorders. A group or individual policy of accident and health insurance or managed care plan amended, delivered, issued, or renewed after the effective date of the amendatory Act of the 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly must provide individuals under 21 years of age coverage for the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders and for the treatment of autism spectrum disorders to the extent that the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders are not already covered by the policy of accident and health insurance or managed care plan.

Coverage provided under this Section shall be subject to a maximum benefit of \$36,000 per year, but shall not be subject to any limits on the number of visits to a service provider. An insurer may not deny or refuse to provide covered services or refuse to reissue, terminate, or restrict coverage because an individual or their dependent is diagnosed with autism, or consider it a preexisting condition.

“Medically necessary” means any care, treatment, intervention, or service.

The following items are covered under this law:

- Psychological care by a licensed psychologist;
- Habilitative or rehabilitative care;
- Applied behavior analysis: Design, implementation (see full text of the law for further explanation);
- Therapeutic care, including behavioral, speech, occupational, and physical therapies (see full text of the law for further explanation).

Treatment that is provided includes:

1. Self care and feeding
2. Pragmatic, receptive, and expressive language
3. Cognitive functioning
4. Applied behavior analysis
5. Motor planning
6. Sensory processing

For full text of the Autism Insurance Bill, please go to:  
<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=095-1005&GA=095>.

This law will help over 4500 families in Illinois. Currently there are over 26,000 families with children with autism in Illinois. Parents should contact their benefits or Human Resources departments to find out if their company insurance coverage is a Self Funded Plan. If it is, you may not be able to access these benefits. Self Funded plans have federal restrictions. To find out more, go to <http://www.specandagg.com/articles/index/11/an-introduction-to-self-insurance>.

Here are some websites to learn more about health insurance in Illinois:  
[www.healthinsurancefinders.com/healthinsurance/illinois/individual.html](http://www.healthinsurancefinders.com/healthinsurance/illinois/individual.html)  
[www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp](http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp)

Illinois Division of Insurance, Office of Consumer Health Insurance, 320 West Washington Street, Springfield IL 62767. Phone 877.527.9431.

Contact the Autism Society of Illinois with questions, either by phone at 1.866.691.1270 or email [betzm@autismillinois.org](mailto:betzm@autismillinois.org).

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# Parenting Bulletin: Depression In Youth

(Excerpt from babycenter.com)

## What are the symptoms?

Depression can manifest itself in your child's behavior in many ways. You may notice that your child is sad and cries often, or that he doesn't seem to have much fun while playing. Or he may instead seem irritable, disagreeable, angry, or defiant much of the time. Dramatic mood swings are common, too.

If your child is depressed, he may have trouble getting along with other children and family members, or he may not be interested in socializing. Other signs of depression include lack of energy, inability to concentrate, a lack of interest, low self-esteem, feelings of guilt, pessimism, poor performance in school, a sense of hopelessness and helplessness, frequent complaints about physical ailments like headaches or stomachaches, and problems eating or sleeping.

If your child is depressed, he may have other difficulties at the same time. "In children, depression often goes hand in hand with other problems, like anxiety, attention deficit disorder, conduct disorders, eating disorders, or substance abuse problems," says Nadine J. Kaslow, Ph.D., professor and chief psychologist at Emory School of Medicine in Atlanta.

It can be tough to tell whether your child's behavior is par for childhood or something to be worried about. But if your child has any of the above symptoms for several weeks or more, or if his symptoms interfere with his ability to function well at home, in school, or with friends, be sure to seek help. Talk with your child's doctor, who can help you sort out whether your child's behavior is cause for concern. If she thinks your child may be depressed, she can refer you to a child psychologist, psychiatrist, or other licensed mental health professional trained to work with children.

## What causes depression?

Most experts agree that depression is caused by a combination of biological and environmental factors. Many people who are depressed have a family history of depression or other mental illness. A child who has one depressed parent, for example, has a 25 percent chance of suffering depression. If both parents have had problems with the disease, the chance goes up to 75 percent.

They may not know the exact cause, but scientists do know that depression is related to changes in brain chemistry. The specific changes involve chemicals called neurotransmitters, which help relay messages from one nerve cell to another. When there's a drop in certain neurotransmitters, the brain doesn't function normally, leading to depression and other forms of mental illness.

But depression is based on more than just genes and biology. Traumatic life events — abandonment; chronic problems in school; a difficult move; or physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect at home, school, or with other trusted caregivers — often trigger depression. Sometimes a loss such as the death of a loved one or beloved pet, or a parents' divorce, can result in depression as well as grieving.

## How is depression treated?

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that psychotherapy, especially cognitive behavioral therapy and interpersonal therapy, is an effective treatment for depression. For mild to moderate depression, says Kaslow, therapy is often enough. However, treatment with medication can be considered at any time for even moderate depression depending on the level of impairment the child is experiencing.

Your child's clinician will take a comprehensive approach that looks at your child, the family and social group, and the factors that may contribute to your child's depression. When you meet with the clinician, he or she will probably begin by doing an interview, getting a complete family history, and may give your child a standardized test for depression.

In addition to counseling your child, the clinician may also use family therapy or parent counseling and treatment for any related conditions that may be discovered, such as anxiety or eating disorders. Medication may also be suggested for your child.

Whether your child can benefit from drug therapy must be decided collaboratively by you, your child, and the clinician, or can be done with a Psychiatric Evaluation to assist in clarifying whether your child's clinical situation is potentially amenable to treatment with a medication. If you're concerned about safety issues, be sure to explore them with your child's doctor. Ask about alternative treatments and options, if you prefer.

Though therapy alone or medication alone can resolve depression, outcome studies have shown that it is best to combine these treatments. In addition, children on antidepressant medication should be closely monitored, ideally by a child psychiatrist. Also, depression can be a chronic disease, and to battle it successfully, a child will need help developing effective coping skills.

## Contact Us

The Prairie Clinic  
1541 E. Fabyan Parkway  
Suite 101  
Geneva, IL 60134

(630) 845-9644 (630) 845-9678 (fax)  
www.theprairieclinic.com

To be included in future distributions of this newsletter, please call us or email [wahlbergservice@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wahlbergservice@sbcglobal.net).

## GROUP THERAPY

Group therapy is an integral component of our treatment. The Prairie Clinic offers a variety of group interventions for children, adolescents, young adults, and parents. All groups are one hour sessions. New patients may require a diagnostic intake to determine group eligibility. For more information, contact us at (630) 845-9644.

### SOCIAL SKILLS GROUPS

*We offer a variety of groups for pre-school, elementary, middle, high school and college students who are struggling with social interactions and peer relationships. Due to high demand, we are expanding our social skills groups. Please contact us to be placed on a list for upcoming group sessions.*

### NEW GROUPS FOR SUMMER!!!

***We are planning a number of new groups based on the demand of our clients. Please contact Denise or Michelle at (630) 845-9644 for more information.***

#### NEW! COLLEGE GIRLS SOCIAL GROUP

A fun, interactive approach to help young adult females improve their social skills.

- Become more aware of social cues
- Develop tools to effectively handle emotions and social situations
- Become empowered and begin to interact effectively with peers, teachers, coaches and others
- Develop skills to advocate for yourself with College Special Needs Departments
- Become a more independent, respectful, successful adult!

#### NEW! PARENTING GROUPS

*Educational groups for parents of elementary or middle school-aged children who are interested in more effective tools to manage problem behaviors and provide emotional support to their children.*

- Understand the function of your child's behavior
- Learn effective strategies to change behavior in yourself and your child
- Learn techniques for applying positive reinforcement, praise, and rewards
- Understand the differences between rewards and punishments for altering behavior
- Identify appropriate incentives to encourage positive behavior in your child

### NEW! SIBLING SUPPORT GROUP

*Siblings of children with autistic spectrum disorders often struggle to have their needs met within the family. They are likely to have conflicting feelings due to discrepant treatment from parents and other family members, as well as confusion or embarrassment related to their brother or sister's behaviors. We are interested in offering a special group for siblings of children with emotional or behavioral disorders that provides a place to openly discuss problems and concerns. Issues to be addressed include:*

- Understanding your sibling's diagnosis
- Discussing the many questions and concerns related to "why does my brother/sister" do that. . . .
- Exploring feelings among siblings who have a brother or sister on the autistic spectrum
- Assist siblings in balancing life within the family

### NEW! SPOUSE SUPPORT GROUP

*Spouses who have a partner diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder may often find themselves feeling frustrated or discouraged. We are interested in offering a special group for spouses that provides a place to openly discuss problems and concerns. Issues to be addressed include:*

- Understanding Asperger's disorder
- Discussing questions and concerns related to your partner's behavior
- Explaining the diagnosis to your children
- Balancing life and responsibilities within the family

### NEW! ANXIETY AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

*We are interested in offering groups for both high school and middle school students to learn effective techniques to recognize and manage stress and anxiety. Through this group, children and adolescents will learn to.*

- Recognize the physical symptoms of anxiety and stress
- Identify negative "worry" thoughts that influence stress and anxiety
- Practice various strategies that reduce tension and anxiety
- Become more effective in communicating worry and anxiety
- Learn methods to problem-solve stressful situations

## Our Services

Our dynamic treatment team enables us to offer a range of services on-site, including:

- Psychological assessments
- Psychiatric evaluations and medication management
- Individual psychotherapy for children, adolescents, and adults
- Family and couples therapy
- Parent coaching and behavioral management training
- Group therapy and skills training
- Cognitive, behavioral, personality, and academic evaluations
- Educational seminars and conferences

Through our combined expertise, we diagnose and treat a variety of emotional and behavioral disorders, with an emphasis on:

- *Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Asperger's Disorder*
- *Depression, Bipolar Disorder, and other Mood Disorders*
- *Anxiety disorders, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder*
- *Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD, ADD)*

## Ask “Dr. Tim”

**Question:** What treatments are recommended for children on the autistic spectrum?

**Response:** Autistic spectrum disorders are category of disorders comprised of deficits or impairments in the following areas: language development, social skills, sensory sensitivity, gross and/or fine motor skills, and cognitive functioning. A number of treatments have been supported by researchers, including *Behavioral and Communication* approaches, such as Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and Relational Development Intervention (RDI), *Biomedical and Diet* approaches, such as drugs, diet and vitamin and mineral therapy, and *Complementary Approaches*, such as animal assisted therapy, music and art therapy, and occupational and speech therapy.

The Prairie Clinic offers a comprehensive approach that targets parent education, training parents on the management of difficult behaviors, social skills development, communication, and the *(cont. on pg. 5)*

## Staff Spotlight

### Michelle Bowlds

We would like to introduce Mrs. Michelle Bowlds to our clerical staff here at The Prairie Clinic! Michelle will be working as a part-time receptionist in our office Mondays through Thursdays. She was previously with School District 101 in Batavia. Her clerical background and outgoing personality will be a plus in assisting all of our patients. Welcome to the practice, Michelle!

### Talitha Mueller, M.Ed., J.D.

Talitha Mueller, M.Ed., J.D. conducts social skills groups for young children at The Prairie Clinic. Ms. Mueller has over 16 years of experience in the field of special education. She has taught students ranging in age from 3-21 in both private and public school settings in Chicago. In 2000, Ms. Mueller received the Sheffield Neighborhood Association Educator's Award for outstanding service to her students, school, and local community. For the past four years, she has worked as an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapist and special education consultant assisting families of children diagnosed with autism. Her educational credentials include: a Bachelor of Science in Education, a Master's degree in Education with a concentration in learning disabilities and behavior disorders, and a Juris Doctorate. She is passionate about helping special education students achieve their fullest potential in both school and the community.

### Stephanie Turner

Stephanie Turner is also involved in leading social skills groups for young children at The Prairie Clinic. Ms. Turner has a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education with a Special Education endorsement. She is currently obtaining a Masters Degree in Special Education. Ms. Turner has been an Early Childhood Special Education teacher for 7 years and has specialized in children on the autism spectrum for 4 years. She has been involved in social groups for children with autism for the past 2 years.

## Ask “Dr. Tim” (cont.)

identification of academic strengths and weaknesses. Our collaborative team of clinicians affords us the ability to offer diagnostic and psychological assessments, individual and family therapy, psychiatric evaluation, medication management, parent coaching, behavior management training, individual and group social skills training, and academic consultation. This integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to treatment addresses a variety of core deficits within the autistic spectrum. Additionally, we offer referrals for speech and language services, occupational therapy, and more intensive intervention.

If you have additional questions or concerns regarding available treatments on autistic spectrum disorders, including Pervasive Developmental Delay and Asperger’s Disorder, contact our office for additional information.

### **FREE!! Parent Seminars**

The following is a list of upcoming events hosted by Dr. Lisa Konick:

#### **Part I. Managing Your Child’s Behavior: How to Stay on Track this Summer**

Summer is generally more unstructured and carefree than the school year. What can you do to keep your child’s behavior in balance? This seminar will help parents understand ways to maintain structure and manage problem behaviors during the summer months.

**Date: Tuesday, June 16**  
**Time: 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

#### **Part II. Managing Your Child’s Behavior: Making the Transition Back to School**

Returning to school can be a difficult transition for many children. This seminar will offer tips for easing the transition along with suggestions for academically supporting your child during the school year.

**Date: Tuesday, August 11**  
**Time: 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

Free seminars held at The Prairie Clinic. Limit 12 attendees. First come, first serve. Call now! RSVP to Denise or Michelle at (630) 845-9644.

## Upcoming Events

The following is a list of upcoming events, seminars, and conference presentations featuring Dr. Tim Wahlberg:

### **SEA 200 Community Forum**

**Topic: Behavior and Autism**

**Date: April 7-9, 2009**

**Time: 7:00-8:30 pm**

**Location: Monroe Middle School, Wheaton, IL**

### **Waubonsee Community College Psi Beta Club**

**Topic: Autism: Problem Behaviors**

**Date: April 16, 2009**

**Time: 11:00 am – 12:15 pm**

### **Special Education on Autism**

**Training Series**

**Date: April 23, May 4, & May 7, 2009**

**Time: 9:00 am – 1:00 pm**

**Location: Hinsdale Central High School**

### **Franklin Park School District**

**Topic: Best Practices for Elementary and Secondary  
Students on the Autistic Spectrum**

**Date: August 24, 2009**

**Time: TBD**

**Location: West Leyden High School**

Dr. Wahlberg and Dr. Konick are now scheduling speaking engagements for Fall 2009 and thereafter. Please contact Denise at (630) 845-9644 or email [wahlbergservice@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wahlbergservice@sbcglobal.net) for more information.