

**BY LAWS
SOUTHWEST MISSOURI AUTISM PROJECT**

**ARTICLE I
Definition of Autism**

Autism – a lifelong developmental disability that typically appears during the first three (3) years of life resulting from a neurological disorder that affects brain functioning which interferes with communication, learning, behavior and social development.

Autism is a severely incapacitating life-long developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. The result of a neurological disorder that affects functioning of the brain, autism and its behavioral symptoms occur in approximately fifteen out of every 10,000 births. Autism is four times more common in boys than girls. It has been found throughout the world in families of all racial, ethnic and social backgrounds. No known factors in the psychological environment of a child have been shown to cause autism.

Some behavioral symptoms of autism include:

1. Disturbances in the rate of appearance of physical, social and language skills.
2. Abnormal responses to sensations. Any one or a combination of senses or responses are affected: sight, hearing, touch, balance, smell, taste, reaction to pain, and the way a child holds his or her body.
3. Speech and language are absent or delayed, while specific thinking capabilities may be present.
4. Abnormal ways of relating to people, objects and events.

Autism occurs by itself or in association with other disorders which affect the function of the brain such as viral infections, metabolic disturbances, and epilepsy. It is important to distinguish autism from retardation or mental disorders since diagnostic confusion may result in referral to inappropriate and ineffective treatment techniques. The severe form of the syndrome may include extreme self-injurious, repetitive, highly unusual and aggressive behavior. Special education programs using behavioral methods have proved to be the most helpful treatment for persons with autism.

AUTISM IS TREATABLE – Early diagnosis and intervention are vital to the future development of the child.

ARTICLE II
Purpose and Objectives

Section 1 The Southwest Missouri Autism Project may provide, but shall not be limited to, the following services:

- (A) Assessment;
- (B) Advocacy training;
- (C) Behavior management training and supports;
- (D) Communication and language therapy;
- (E) Consultation on individualized education and habilitation plans;
- (F) Crisis intervention;
- (G) Information and referral assistance;
- (H) Life skills;
- (I) Music therapy;
- (J) Occupational therapy, sensory integration therapy, and consultation;
- (K) Parent or caregiver training;
- (L) Public education and information dissemination;
- (M) Respite care; and
- (N) Staff training

The purpose for which this project is formed shall be:

- A To monitor and assure that all individuals with autism and their families have access to appropriate services;
- B To recommend objectives, policies, goals and procedures for developing and improving the system;
- C To provide a means of liaison between the Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MR/DD), appropriate agencies and the general public;
- D To review, advise and recommend on programs, policies, methods of treatment and service delivery;
- E To perform all other advisory functions as may be agreed upon with the Division of MR/DD;
- F To assess the needs of individuals with autism and their families of the Springfield and Joplin Regional Centers;
- G To contract with the service providers(s) to meet the needs of the above individuals and their families.

ARTICLE III
Membership

Section 1 The Southwest Missouri Autism Project will serve persons eligible for services from the Springfield and Joplin Regional Centers.

Section 2 The Southwest Missouri Autism Project shall be developed and monitored by a parent advisory committee composed of eight (8) persons that have family members with autism, including family members that are young children, adolescents and adults, and are clients of Springfield or Joplin Regional Centers. Four (4) members of the advisory committee will be from the Joplin region and four (4) will be from the Springfield region.

Section 3 Upon expiration of a member's term, a successor shall be elected by the committee for one 3-year term. If a member cannot full his term, a successor shall be elected by the committee to fulfill the remainder of the term.

One-third of the members serving on January 1, 1995 shall continue to serve until January 1, 1996. One-third shall serve until January 1, 1997, and the remaining one-third shall serve until January 1, 1998. Length of those terms shall be determined by drawing lots.

Section 4 No member shall serve more than two (2) consecutive 3-year terms. A member may service until a successor has been elected.

Section 5 No committee member shall be a service provider, a member of a service provider's board of directors, or an employee of a service provider or the division.

Section 6 The committees shall make every effort to elect members to represent the cultural diversity of the project areas and to represent persons with autism of all ages and capabilities.

Section 7 Prospective members must attend a minimum of three (3) PAC meetings before submitting applications.

ARTICLE IV
Officers

- Section 1 Officers of the advisory committee shall be a chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary. Annual elections shall occur in July.
- Section 2 The terms of officers shall be one (1) year for chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary. Officers may serve two (2) consecutive 1-year terms. If possible, position of chairperson should alternate between regional offices.
- Section 3 Chairperson is the principal executive officer. S/he will preside over all meetings. S/he will sign all instruments agreed upon by the committee. S/he shall perform all other duties incident to the office as prescribed by the committee. Chairperson will present a progress report at year's end. Chairperson will present all information regarding meetings attended plus any other information relative to the project to the committee. Chairperson will, in conjunction with the committee and navigator, prepare the agenda for upcoming meetings.
- Section 4 Chairperson shall be empowered to appoint standing committees for the purpose of administrative, planning, service, advocacy, and temporary committees as may be necessary. Members of the committees, excluding administrative, may include persons other than voting members of the advisory committee. Persons on these committees will report to the chair or a person designated by the chair.
- Section 5 In the absence of chairperson, or in the event of chairperson's inability to act, the vice-chair shall perform the duties of the chairperson and such other duties as may be assigned by the chairperson or committee.
- Section 6 Secretary shall keep minutes of the meetings and shall secure that all notices of meetings are duly given. S/he shall perform other duties as assigned by chair or committee.
- Section 7 If any officer cannot fulfill the term, an election by the committee members will be held to fill that position.
- Section 8 The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson must have a minimum of one (1) year's experience on the PAC.

ARTICLE V
Meetings

- Section 1 The committee shall hold regular monthly meetings or more often at the call of the chairperson.
- Section 2 Special meetings may be called by the chair or by one-third of the committee by written request to the chair. Notice shall be given at least 48 hours in advance and shall state purpose of meeting. No other business shall be transacted at a special meeting other than the purpose of the meeting.
- Section 3 All meetings shall be open to the public in accordance with Sections 610.010 through 610.022, RSMo.
- Section 4 In absence of chair and vice-chair, meeting will be conducted by member of committee.
- Section 5 A quorum is a simple majority.

ARTICLE VI
Committee Members

- Section 1 Members are expected to attend all meetings. If not able to attend a meeting, contact the chair or coordinator.
- Section 2 If a member fails to attend three consecutive meetings without prior notification, the member may be removed by a vote of a simple majority.
- Section 3 Prospective committee members are required to fill out a membership application for the Southwest Missouri Autism Advisory Committee. This application is to be given to the chair. The application is then reviewed by the committee and if agreed upon, the recommendation is sent to the Southwest District Deputy Director for review and confirmation. The Deputy Director then sends a notice of acceptance to the new member.
- Section 4 The SWMO PAC shall nominate two (2) representatives and one (1) alternate to serve on the statewide Missouri Advisory Committee on Autism, which meets quarterly in Jefferson City. The statewide committee is appointed by the Division Director. The membership should represent the cultural diversity of the state and represent persons with autism of all ages and capabilities. The SWMO PAC shall from time to time nominate successor representatives and alternates as required to serve on the statewide committee as terms expire and/or positions are made available.

ARTICLE VII
Committee Responsibilities

- Section 1 The committees' responsibilities shall include but not be limited to the following:
- A. Advocacy;
 - B. Contract Monitoring;
 - C. Determination of services to be provided;
 - D. Recommendation of policy, budget and service priorities;
 - E. Monthly review of service delivery;
 - F. Planning;
 - G. Public education and awareness;
 - H. Selection of service providers;
 - I. Send needs assessment to all consumers as soon as possible to committee;
 - J. Send yearly satisfaction survey to all consumers as soon as possible to committee.

ARTICLE VIII
Finances

- Section 1 Committee shall keep abreast of all monies, how utilized and balance on hand on a monthly basis.
- Section 2 Annual accounting of all funds including report of annual audit. Account of all money on hand from time of inception of project to present time.
- Section 3 The fiscal year of this committee shall be from July 1 through June 30.

ARTICLE IX
Conflict of Interest

- Section 1 All committee members and all providers of the committee shall avoid any conflicts of interest and shall comply with the applicable provision of Sections 105.450 through 105.454, RSMo.

ARTICLE X
Disagreements

In the event a parent advisory committee disagrees with a decision of the district deputy director related to operation of the autism project, the issue may be referred to the Missouri Advisory Committee on Autism for its recommendation to the division director.

ARTICLE XI
Parliamentary Authority

Section 1 Alice Sturges Standard Rules of Parliamentary Procedures shall govern the conduct of business in all cases in which they are applicable and not in conflict with the by-laws.

ARTICLE XII
Standing Rules

Standing rules may be adopted with previous notice by a simple majority vote of the committee at any meeting. At any meeting they may be suspended by a simple majority vote or they may be amended or rescinded by a two-thirds vote. If notice of the proposed action was given at a previous meeting or in the call for this meeting, the standing rules may be amended or rescinded by a simple majority vote.

Section 1 During discussion of committee, the public is welcome to make comments by recognition of the chair.

ARTICLE XIII
Ratification

Section 1 These by-laws shall become operative upon their ratification by the majority of the committee.

Section 2 By-laws revisions require written notice to all members thirty (30) days prior to ratification.