Autistic Expertise

People with autism are often regarded as experts in their fields. However, until recently, their knowledge of autism itself hadn’t really been studied. A study surveying 636 adults with various relationships to autism on their scientific knowledge, definition, and views of autism found that the participants with autism had more scientifically based knowledge of autism than their peers. It also found that they preferred to describe autism experientially or neutrally rather than using the medical model. The findings of this study suggest that adults with autism should be considered experts, and involved in autism research.

Many of us know that the expertise of people with autism extends far beyond just autism. Whether they know a lot about computers and technology, movie stars, or just about anything else, they are often able to provide an astonishing array of facts and figures related to their interests. People with autism have the amazing ability to study something deeply, and have a strong understanding of it. They can be experts in anything they have found interest in, and often enjoy sharing this knowledge with others. Some, like Dr. Temple Grandin, have become very well known for their ideas and expertise, and are able to travel the world and share what they know.

Autism is very prevalent today, and chances are you meet and interact with several people with autism as you go about your day. In our community, we are fortunate to have many people with autism who are experts in many different things. The depth of their knowledge is astounding. As a community, we can empower our experts to share their knowledge and experiences. You never know what you’ll learn! After all, “if you’ve met one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism.”

DR. TEMPLE GRANDIN
Informal Q&A focused on “How Families and School Can Support Individuals with Autism”

4-5pm, Tuesday, February 7
WWU Performing Arts Center
516 High Street, Bellingham

Grandin will speak in an informal question and answer session from 4-5pm on Tuesday, February 7 in the WWU Performing Arts Center. The Q&A will focus on “How Families and School Can Support Individuals with Autism.”

This event is free and open to the public. No registration or tickets required. Please allow adequate time for parking.

For more info, please visit https://wce.wwu.edu/e-atrc/grandin.
BILLS OF INTEREST

Now that the legislative session has begun, bills are being proposed that impact individuals with disabilities and their families. Some bills of interest that are currently under consideration include:

**HB 1264 & SB 5179 HEARING AIDS** - Provide medical assistance coverage for hearing devices for adults

**HB 1304 & SB 5201 COMMUNITY ACCESS AND EMPLOYMENT** - DDA clients must have access to 20 hours a week of both community access & employment services

**HB 1322 & SB 5360 RESPITE PROVIDERS** - Reduce training hours for respite providers caring for a person with DD & working less than 300 hours a year.

**SB 5155 SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS** - Schools cannot suspend/expel children in grades K-2, must use evidenced-based programs to support students.

**SB 5432 FUNDING FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION** - Revises the formula for the excess cost allocation to school districts for special education programs for students with disabilities.

To keep up to date on the budget process and other legislation, visit: http://arcwa.org/takeaction.

Advocacy Days offer a way for you to learn about the legislative process in person. It’s a hands-on tool kit for learning how to make a difference! For information or to register, call 1-888-754-8798, ext. 105, email bean@arcwa.org or visit http://arcwa.org/takeaction/washingtonstate/advocacy_day.

**Advocacy Days 2017**

Advocacy Days Schedule

**Dates & Highlighted Topics**

- February 1: Employment Day
- February 8: Disability Protections
- February 15: Supported Living Services
- February 22: Multi-Cultural Day
- March 1: Meet Your Legislators
- March 8: How McCleary Affects You
- March 15: Family Services
- March 22: Budget Overview
- March 29: Self-Advocacy/Disability Pride

All Advocacy Days are held at The United Churches of Olympia (110 11th Avenue SE, Olympia) or the General Administration Building (210 11th Ave SW, Olympia).

Want to keep track of what is happening or make comments on bills that are important to you? Check out the new app on the Leg.wa.gov website: http://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/. You can type in a bill number and see how a bill is progressing, find videos of hearings, even comment on a bill, or request email updates.

Climb on Board!

Opportunity to visit Olympia and meet with your legislators!

The Arc of Whatcom County will be chartering a bus from Bellingham to Olympia to participate in the “Disability Pride” Legislative Advocacy Day on **Wednesday, March 29**. The bus will leave at approximately 7am for a full day in Olympia. Parents, self-advocates, and care providers are welcome to come at no cost to you. We will provide information and materials to help you understand the issues and share your story.

If you are interested in joining us, please email Monica at monicab@arcwhatcom.org or call (360) 715-0170, ext. 303, by March 21st to reserve your seat!

If you plan to join us in Olympia on March 29th, be sure to mark your calendar for our Legislative Advocacy workshop on March 21.
ESIT Submits Plan to Washington Legislature

The 2016 Legislature passed (SB) 5879 which required the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to develop and submit a plan to the Washington Legislature on comprehensive and coordinated services for all children eligible for the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program in accordance with part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

This plan focuses on four main priorities:

- **Regionalization:** Reorganizing the ESIT service delivery system for efficiency and accountability, consolidating the current 25 regions into 12 by 2018, ensuring consistent monitoring and support, effective communication, collaboration and training. King, Snohomish, Pierce, and Spokane Counties will maintain their roles as Local Lead Agencies (LLA). Provider agencies not included under one of the four LLA’s will receive support and monitoring directly from DEL staff.

- **Resources:** Ensuring adequate resources to support services for children and families. This includes consistently accessing all available resources (Medicaid, parent fees, state funding and public & private insurance).

- **Robust Data:** Implementing an effective data system that collects data for general supervision and increased accountability, billing activities, and reporting. Information must be available through targeted and pre-scripted reports and is accessible to stakeholders.

- **Rules:** To ensure that eligible infants, toddlers, and their families receive equitable access to high-quality services and the supports needed to promote positive outcomes, the rules, lines of authority, and responsibilities at state, LLA, and provider levels must be clearly articulated and followed.

To read the entire plan, visit https://del-public-files.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/ESIT/ESIT%20Plan_FINAL_5.pdf

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**Move to Managed Care for Individuals with Both Medicaid Apple Health & Private Insurance**

If you or someone in your family has Medicaid Apple Health coverage in addition to primary private health insurance, you will have received a notice from the Health Care Authority recently, letting you know about a change from fee-for-service medical coverage (aka the “coupon”) to managed care, beginning January 1, 2017.

It’s part of a process that was started a few years ago, when most SSI eligible individuals who receive Medicaid were transitioned to a managed care plan.

**What to Expect**

**STEP 1:** Read your letter and booklet from HCA. The Health Care Authority (HCA) will send you a Welcome to Washington Apple Health booklet that lists basic services. This may look like junk mail but is really very important for your health care coverage. The letter in the booklet will include the name of the managed care health plan you have been enrolled in.

**STEP 2:** Find out if your health care providers are part of your assigned plan’s network. Each plan has its own provider network of doctors, clinics, hospitals, pharmacies, and specialists. After you receive notification of your managed care plan, contact your current health care provider(s) to find out if s/he contracts with the plan you’ve been enrolled in. Or, contact the plan for information about its provider network. Since not all plans have a good network of providers in Whatcom County, this could lead to problems with getting health care covered. Currently, Molina has the highest number of contracted providers in our area.

**STEP 3:** Keep the plan you have been assigned or request a change. If your provider is not in the plan, or they’re not willing to bill your plan, you may want to change plans. Ask your health care providers which managed care plans they participate in or are willing to bill, and request a change to that plan. Molina and CHPW have been available in our area for some time and Molina generally has the best network of providers in our area, but United Health Care and Coordinated Care are starting to get contracted with some providers in our area. To switch your plan you can use the ProviderOne Client Portal at https://www.waproviderone.org/client or call 1-800-562-3022, press 6 for client services, and then press 2 for health plan enrollment.

**Things to Consider**

- If there’s a specialist you prefer, check to make sure they are a member of the plan’s provider network.
- Think about current or potential treatments when selecting a plan. What is the plan’s hospital affiliation?
- Ask about the plan’s process and policies around pharmacy benefits. There may be some differences in each plan’s formularies; however, Apple Health requires that the plans continue your treatment plan, including prescriptions, for 90 days or until you can be evaluated by the plan’s provider.

Source: http://informingfamilies.org/move-to-managed-care/
ASK THE ADVOCATE WORKSHOP

Applying for DDA

For parents & caregivers
6-8pm, Tuesday, February 21
The Arc of Whatcom County
2602 McLeod Road, Bellingham

Do you have a child with developmental delays or disabilities, but aren’t sure what services are out there to help your child? Have you heard about DDA services, but are not sure what they are or how to apply? Have you wanted to apply for DDA services but just haven’t gotten around to it yet?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then this is the workshop for you! Leslie Kivett, Eligibility Case Resource Manager for the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) will join us to tell us about DDA services. She will discuss the eligibility requirements for these services and the steps for filling out the application. Then we will have time to work on completing your child’s application and answer any specific questions you may have. Now is the time that new clients are being added to DDA services, so don’t delay! Join us for this important workshop and check one big thing off your to-do list!

Please RSVP by February 16th: (360) 715-0170, ext. 303, monicab@arcwhatcom.org. Limited supervised care for family members is available on a first-come, first-served basis with RSVP by February 16.

Spin Dance

6-8pm, Monday, February 20
Bellingham Senior Center
315 Halleck Street, Bellingham

Bellingham Parks and Recreation, The Max Higbee Center, and Whatcom County Parks sponsor monthly dances for individuals with disabilities. At the SPIN Dances, you can always count on lively music provided by local bands or DJ’s, a healthy snack at intermission, and FANTASTIC company! All persons age 14 and over are invited for music, dancing, and fun! For information, call Amanda: (360) 778-7000.

Autistic Adults Meetup

4-5pm, Thursday, February 9
Max Higbee Center
1210 Bay Street, Suite 201

Autistic Adults Meetup is the only group of its kind in Bellingham! Come join Center for Independence on February 9th and every second Thursday of the month for interesting activities and food with other autistic adults.

For more info and to RSVP, contact Kelsey Severson at (360) 393-3890, ext. 203 or email kelsey@cfinorth.org.

P2P Support Meeting

7-8:30pm, Monday, February 13
The Arc of Whatcom County
2602 McLeod Road, Bellingham

Topic: Self Care

Join other parents of children with developmental delays, disabilities, and ongoing health care needs in a comfortable, confidential setting for mutual support. Free on-site child care available for those who RSVP by February 10th: (360) 715-0170, ext. 302, or KarleneU@arcwhatcom.org.

HEARTY PARTY 5K

Saturday, February 11
Max Higbee Center
1210 Bay Street #102, Bellingham

Registration/Packet Pick-Up: 8am-9:30am
Race begins at 10am

Roses are red, violets are blue, we’re running a 5k and you should come too! This Valentine’s Day weekend, grab a pal, furry friend, or special someone and run your heart out at Max Higbee Center’s “Hearty Party” 5k! This community event benefits Max Higbee Center, a non-profit organization providing recreational services to teens and adults living with developmental disabilities. Support a great cause and join the party for the 4th annual 5k with beautiful views of Bellingham Bay and Zuanich Park. The fun will continue with a hearty after-party at Boundary Bay Brewery.

For info, email sadie.maxhigbee@gmail.com or call (360) 922-2450.
**Autism 200 Series**

Autism 200 is a series of 90-minute classes for parents and caregivers of children with autism as well as teachers and community providers who wish to better understand autism spectrum disorder. Faculty from Seattle Children’s, the University of Washington and community providers teach the classes. Classes are held on most third Thursdays of the month at Seattle Children’s Hospital from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in Wright Auditorium. Lectures are also recorded and can be viewed on the website following the lecture. For a list of teleconferencing sites or to view past lectures, please visit: http://www.seattlechildrens.org/classes-community/current-class-offerings/autism-200-series/

**Autism 202: The State of Autism in 2017**
February 16, 2017

*Instructors: Heather Mefford, MD, and Jennifer Gerds, PhD*

Over the past decade, there have been major advances in our understanding of autism genetics, and genetic testing is often offered to patients and families. The tests can be overwhelming and confusing. We will review what is known about autism genetics and what kinds of genetic tests are available to families. In addition, we will discuss the pros and cons of genetic testing and what types of results you might expect to receive. Finally, we will highlight research opportunities and exciting advances in genetic testing that are expected to become available in the near future.

*Please note: These classes are no longer available at WWU but can be viewed online: http://www.seattlechildrens.org/classes-community/current-class-offerings/autism-200-series/*

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**SAVE THE DATE**

**Whatcom County Transition Fair**

9am-12:30pm, Thursday, March 30
St. Luke’s Health Education Center
3333 Squalicum Parkway, Bellingham

**Charting the Life Course**

Michelle Reynolds Ph.D., Sibling
with Crystal Bell and Jane St. John, Parent Advocates

9am-12pm, February 22, 2017
Bellingham School District Offices
Board Training Room, 1306 Dupont St., Bellingham

It takes a combination of services and supports to create a full and inclusive life: personal strengths and assets, personal relationships, technology, community-based supports, and eligibility based services. Come and learn what steps can be taken to create a full life!

**Duncan Seminar on Developmental Disabilities, Behavioral Challenges and Mental Health**

Friday, March 31, 2017
Seattle Children’s Wright Auditorium
4800 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, Washington 98105

Seattle Children’s Outreach Education, Division of Developmental Medicine and the Center for Children with Special Needs is proud to sponsor the 38th Annual Duncan Seminar: The Juggling Act: Developmental Disabilities, Behavioral Challenges and Mental Health. Please join us on March 31, 2017 for this one-day interdisciplinary conference focused on the care of children with neurodevelopmental disabilities and their families. Experts from Seattle Children’s, the healthcare community and families will share their experiences and learning on the topic of behavioral mental health in children with neurodevelopmental disorders. This seminar is geared towards a wide audience of healthcare professionals. Family members affected by this condition are also encouraged to attend.

For more info, contact lynna.song@seattlechildrens.org or at (206) 987-5318.
How to Apply for Assistive Technology (AT) through Community First Choice

Community First Choice (CFC) is a state Medicaid plan that offers personal care services and other benefits. Personal care is for people on Medicaid who need help with “activities of daily living” (ADLs), which are things like eating, dressing, bathing, or moving around (mobility).

What is Assistive Technology (AT)?
AT includes devices and services used to increase a person’s independence or as a substitute for help from another person with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs.) Computers, devices or apps that help with ADLs or health related tasks and would take the place of help from another person would be examples of covered AT.

What is NOT Covered under CFC Assistive Technology?
- CFC will cover AT only after health insurance coverage has been used up or does not cover it.
- The following are not covered: Specialized medical equipment, recreational or entertainment devices, recurring monthly fee items, and home modifications.

How much funding will CFC give for Assistive Technology?
A CFC client can get $500 per fiscal year (July 1 - June 30) with no carry over from one year to the next. On each July 1, the client will start over with $500. Sometimes a DDA Case Manager (CM) can request an Exception to Rule (ETR), and ask for more than $500 for the client.

What are the steps for requesting CFC Assistive Technology?
1. Client: Get a formal letter (on letterhead) from the therapy provider (speech therapist, behavior management provider, physical or occupational therapist, etc.) which explains how the technology will help the client be more independent in their ADLs, or will replace the need for a caregiver to help with an ADL task. Make sure the letter gets to your DDA CM.

   NOTE: The letter should ask for all parts of the AT at one time to avoid paying more than one shipping fee. For example, if the request is for an electronic tablet to serve as a communication device, the protective cover and the app should be requested at the same time.

2. DDA Case Manager will review the request to see that it meets the AT requirements. If the CM approves the request, s/he will give the client the website address for Sherwood, the AT vendor that DDA is contracted with, and tell the client to fill out the Sherwood intake form on-line at Sherwood’s website.

3. Client: Tell the CM when you are done with the on-line intake form.
4. Sherwood will then contact the CM with an invoice. If the amount is over $500, the Case Manager will ask for an ETR, if appropriate.
5. DDA Case Manager will authorize the payment and tell Sherwood.
6. Sherwood will send the AT device to the client.

Parent to Parent recently hosted a Support Meeting with the topic of Assistive Technology with guest Linda Schleef, the Director at Ershig Assistive Technology Resource Center. For those of you who attended the workshop, or those of you who are interested, here is the link to the list of apps that was recommended at the meeting: http://arcwhatcom.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Apps-on-E-ATRC-iPads.pdf
The Parent Coalition of Whatcom County provides leadership support for individuals with developmental disabilities and their parents/guardians. The goal of the Parent Coalition is to enable persons with developmental disabilities and their parents/guardians to become effective and involved in accessing services.

The Parent Coalition newsletter is published monthly by:

The Arc of Whatcom County
Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 715-0170
www.arcwhatcom.org

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Stay Connected
Online Community Calendar: Visit The Arc’s website at www.arcwhatcom.org and click on Events.

Facebook: Visit our FB page: www.facebook.com/ArcWhatcom for the latest information and events.

E-alerts: The Parent Coalition emails updates on legislation, workshops and upcoming activities. To sign up, visit www.arcwhatcom.org or email monicab@arcwhatcom.org.

The Parent Coalition is funded by grants from the Developmental Disabilities Program of Whatcom County, the United Way and your generous donations.

The Parent Coalition

¡ADIÓS Y GRACIAS!

The Parent to Parent program has seen many changes over the past few months. Moving our offices to the Dan Godwin Community Center has been one and saying farewell to Marcela Jiménez another.

Marcela has been the Parent to Parent Latino Community Coordinator for the past three years. It has been mine and Melissa’s pleasure to work with her. She has been an asset to the Latino community and our program. We would like to thank her for her time with the Parent to Parent Program, her dedication and all of her hard work. The Latino Program has grown by leaps and bounds. Thank you Marcela! You will be missed!

-Karlene and Melissa

Introducing Our New Latino Community Coordinator

Parent to Parent wishes to welcome Marta Mejia. We have had the pleasure of knowing Marta over the past few years as a Helping Parent and know, without a doubt, she will be a great addition to our program!

Hi Everyone,

My name is Marta Mejia, I am from El Salvador. I am married; I have a nine year old daughter and live in Blaine.

I have been in the Parent to Parent program for many years. I feel so grateful for the opportunity to be the new Latino Coordinator; I am happy to be able to help and work with the community.

I hope I can count on your support.

Sincerely,
Marta Mejia

¡ADIÓS Y GRACIAS!
Event Calendar

February 2017

2 Thursday, 4:30-6:30pm
Young Adult Self-Advocacy Meeting
The Arc’s Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Contact Jessika: 715-0170, ext 304

9 Thursday, 4-5pm
CFI: Autistic Adults Meetup
See page 4 for details.

11 Saturday, 10am
Hearty Party 5K
See page 4 for details.

11 Saturday, 10:30am
My Way Matinee: A Dog’s Purpose
Barkley Village Stadium 16 IMAX & RPX
3005 Cinema Place
Contact: (360) 527-1320

13 Monday, 7-8:30pm
Parent to Parent Support Meeting
The Arc’s Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Contact Karlene: 715-0170, ext 302

16 Thursday, 7-8:30pm
Autism 200 Series
See page 5 for details.

18 Saturday, 6-7pm
People First Meeting
For meeting location and details, contact Susan Larson: 738-2060

20 Monday, 6-8pm
Spin Dance
Senior Center, 315 Halleck Street
Contact Amanda: 778-7000

21 Tuesday, 6-8pm
PC Workshop: Applying for DDA
The Arc’s Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Contact Monica: 715-0170, ext 303

22 Wednesday, 9am-12pm
Charting the Life Course
See page 5 for details.

22 Wednesday, 5:30-6:30pm
The Arc’s Board of Directors Meeting
The Arc’s Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Contact Beverly: 715-0170, ext 306

NOTE: All events listed are in Bellingham unless otherwise noted. Find more events at www.arcwhatcom.org/wp/events/.

Save the date for the 9th Annual Autism Awareness Auction benefiting FACES Northwest
Saturday, April 1, 2017
Bellingham Golf & Country Club
Doors open at 5:30pm. Tickets are $75 each. Includes gourmet dinner and complimentary beer and wine. Reserve your tickets by March 17 at www.facesnorthwest.com.

FACES Northwest is a non-profit organization founded by parents of individuals with autism. Since 1997, FACES has operated the ONLY local summer program providing education, recreation and one-on-one support for children and young adults with autism.

For more info, call (360) 389-2151 or visit www.facesnorthwest.com.