



GOVERNOR'S COORDINATING OFFICES

Community Initiatives · Service & Volunteerism · Performance Improvement
Crime Prevention, Youth, & Victim Services · Small, Minority, & Women Business Affairs
Banneker-Douglass Museum · Volunteer Maryland · Deaf & Hard of Hearing

July 1st, 2021

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan
State House 100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Carol A. Beatty
217 E. Redwood Street, Suite 1300
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

The Honorable Bill Ferguson
President
Senate of Maryland
State House, H-107
Annapolis MD 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker
Maryland House of Delegates
State House, H-101
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Report required by Human Services Article § 7-111(d) HB 847/Ch. 341, 2020
(MSAR #12793)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Pursuant to HU § 7-111(d) HB 847/Ch. 341, 2020 (1) on or before July 1 each year, beginning in 2021, the State Coordinator For Autism Strategy shall submit a report to the Secretary of Disabilities, the Governor, and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly on the development, implementation, and effectiveness of the strategic plan required under subsection (b) of this section. (2) within 30 days after a report required under paragraph (1) of this subsection is submitted, the State Coordinator For Autism Strategy shall publish the report on the Department's website.

If further information is required, please do not hesitate to contact Steven J. McAdams, Executive Director, Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, steven.mcadams@maryland.gov

Sincerely,

Steven J. McAdams
Executive Director
Governor's Office of Community
Initiatives

Carol A. Beatty,
Secretary
Maryland Department of Disabilities





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Strategic Plan for Addressing Autism- Related Needs in the State

Submitted July 1, 2021



Introduction

HB 847/Ch. 341, 2020 - State Coordinator for Autism Strategy and Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs was passed by the Maryland General Assembly in the 2020 Maryland General Assembly Session. This legislation requires the creation of a state government position called the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy and an Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs, and the development of a strategic plan for addressing autism-related needs in the State on or before July 1, 2021.

Legislative Implementation

The State Coordinator for Autism Strategy position was established under Chapter 341 of 2020 to be housed at the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD); funding, however, was not allocated in the FY 21 budget. Additionally the establishment of a stakeholder advisory group and development of a strategic plan was delayed because of the State of Emergency COVID-19 response and subsequent hiring freeze.

HB 718 of 2021 established funding in conjunction with the Governor's proposed fiscal 2022 budget appropriation and moved the position to the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (GOCI). These actions resulted from the assessment of intergovernmental discussions with the executive and legislative branches.

The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives is part of the Governor's Coordinating Offices and its mission is to serve as a coordinating office for the governor that connects Marylanders to economic, volunteer, and human service opportunities through government, business, and nonprofit partners. The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives is uniquely structured; whereas it houses and oversees the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism and community affairs within the Executive Branch of Maryland government. It serves as the State government's principal liaison to the faith based community and associated organizations. It is assigned responsibility for the overall direction and coordination of the Volunteer Maryland program; a federally funded AmeriCorps program operated directly by the State of Maryland. The GOCI has oversight of the Banneker Douglass Museum. The museum is the states' repository for housing and curating Maryland's African American History and Culture. Additionally, the Office of Community Initiatives includes responsibility for outreach to cultural and ethnic communities across Maryland that includes eight (8) Governor's Commissions. The Commissions include, the Commission on Middle Eastern Affairs, the Commission on African Affairs, the Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, the Commons on South Asian American Affairs, Indian & Native American Affairs, Hispanic Affairs, Caribbean Affairs, the

Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture and lastly the Maryland Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism.

These and other State commissions work to implement initiatives to ensure equal access by all Marylanders to the State's civic, social, economic, health, and political affairs in a progressive manner that will achieve maximum positive outcomes. Therefore, GOCI's leadership and staff will support the Autism Strategy Coordinator and Advisory Council competently, and will provide smooth implementation in partnership with the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

GOCI is now consulting with MDOD and completing the foundational administrative tasks to create the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy position and facilitating the composition of the Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs. The Advisory Stakeholder Group will comprise strategic stakeholders in the Autism community and positions appointed by the governor. GOCI is currently soliciting interest from prospective members and will be working with the Governor's Appointments Office to establish the Advisory Stakeholder Group. Member interests are being accepted and appointments will occur to meet the group criteria.

Proposed Structure for a Strategic Plan to Address Autism-Related Needs in the State

Below is the proposed structure for the Strategic Plan for Addressing Autism-Related Needs in the State as required by Human Services Article § 7-111 (b)(2) HB 847/Ch. 341, 2020.

* Please note - this proposed strategic plan is subject to revision as necessary when the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy position is filled and the full Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs is appointed.

The proposed structure for the Strategic Plan includes all legislative requirements of Human Services Article § 7-111 (b)(2) HB 847/Ch. 341, 2020.

On or before July 1, 2021, develop a strategic plan for addressing autism-related needs in the State, including, at a minimum, needs in the areas of employment, housing, health care, training for first responders and criminal justice professionals, and identification and intervention.

Employment

The State Coordinator for Autism Strategy jointly with the Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs will identify and track quantitative and qualitative performance measures congruent with the following objectives:

- Reducing the unemployment and underemployment rates of people with autism
- Improving postsecondary transition services and graduation rates
- Increasing degree-granting college admission and participation and postsecondary vocational internships and apprenticeships leading to licensure

Housing

The State Coordinator for Autism Strategy jointly with the Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs will identify and track quantitative and qualitative performance measures congruent with the following objective:

- Increasing the availability of safe, affordable, and accessible housing

Health

The State Coordinator for Autism Strategy jointly with the Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs will identify and track quantitative and qualitative performance measures congruent with the following objectives:

- Identifying and reducing the negative physical and mental health outcomes of people with autism, including:
 - Identifying and improving caregiver and family support and respite services
 - Evaluating need and implementation strategies for the adult autism waiver
 - Reducing wait times for the Autism Waiver Registry
 - Promoting social inclusion and understanding for people with autism
 - Ensuring equitable access to diagnostic and therapeutic support services in rural areas and for underserved populations

Safety

The State Coordinator for Autism Strategy jointly with the Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs will identify and track quantitative and qualitative performance measures congruent with the following objective:

- Evaluating the need for and making recommendations regarding training programs for law enforcement, criminal justice professionals, or other first responders that address the effective recognition of and response to the needs of individuals with autism and their caregivers