

TRICARE: Provide Military Families the Care they Need

Senate Amendment #2265

U.S. Senator Patty Murray and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

Behavioral health treatments for children with developmental disabilities are widely recognized as effective therapies that can help children learn the skills to be successful in school, live independently, and find meaningful employment. However, despite the widely-recognized benefits of these treatments, they are not always available for families who receive their health care through TRICARE.

The *American Academy of Pediatrics* and the *National Institute of Mental Health* support behavioral health parity so that evidence based therapies can be accessed by children and youth with developmental disabilities. This includes systematic application of ABA for children with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities.

Why is this amendment needed?

- TRICARE has refused to provide adequate coverage of behavioral health treatments for children with developmental disabilities. Under current policies, many children are denied care. And, those children who do receive care often receive *less than half* of the prescribed treatment time.
- Coverage of behavioral health treatments in the civilian workforce has developed at a tremendous rate. Thirty-four states and the District of Columbia have laws requiring private insurers to cover ABA as a medically necessary service. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management categorizes ABA as a "medical therapy" and covers ABA for federal employees.
- Hundreds of peer-reviewed research articles in behavioral science, health, and education journals during the past 50 years show behavioral health treatment, including applied behavior analysis, is linked to specific and meaningful changes in functioning and demonstrate the effectiveness of behavioral health treatment for children with developmental disabilities. It helps children learn the skills necessary to be successful in school, engage in employment, and live independently.

What would this amendment do?

Under TRICARE, the amendment would provide coverage of certain behavioral health treatments for individuals with developmental disabilities, when prescribed by a physician. The amendment creates a separate account, the "Defense Dependents Developmental Disabilities Account," to pay for the treatments. The cost is \$60 million, and is fully offset by drawing down the size of the Office of Secretary of Defense.

Who supports this amendment?

Military Officers Association of America, National Military Family Association, Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, American Academy of Pediatrics, VetsFirst, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Autism Speaks, Easter Seals, The Arc, Association of University Centers on Disabilities, Autism National Committee, National Down Syndrome Society, ACCSES, ADHD Aware, American Dance Therapy Association, American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, American Association on Health and Disability, Brain Injury Association of America, Epilepsy Foundation, Family Voices, Health & Disability Advocates, Lutheran Services in America Disability Network, Mental Health America, National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, National Organization on Disability, National Council on Independent Living, Physician-Parent Caregivers, and School Social Work Association of America.