



Combating Autism Reauthorization Act of 2011

On September 30, 2011, President Obama signed the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act of 2011 (CARA, P.L. 112-32), ensuring the continuation of important research, early identification and professional training under the Combating Autism Act of 2006 (CAA, P.L. 109-416). CARA is a clean reauthorization, simply extending funding for the CAA's programs for an additional three years at current (fiscal year 2011) funding levels.

The House bill (H.R. 2005), introduced on May 26, 2011, was sponsored by Reps. Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Mike Doyle (D-PA) and garnered 100 bipartisan co-sponsors. The Senate bill (S. 1094) was sponsored by Sens. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Mike Enzi (R-WY), along with Richard Durbin (D-IL), and Scott Brown (R-MA). It was also introduced on May 26, 2011. The Senate bill gained 38 bipartisan co-sponsors.

In short, the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act of 2011 amends the Public Health Service Act to extend and reauthorize through FY2014: (1) the surveillance and research program for autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities; (2) the education, early detection, and intervention program for autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities; and (3) the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee. The Act authorizes \$693 million over the 2012-2014 period for autism spectrum disorder and developmental disabilities research, screening, treatment and education. Following is a summary of the major provisions of the Combating Autism Act of 2006, which are reauthorized and extended by the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act.

Activities to Improve Autism-Related Research

Section 2 of the law authorizes the Director of NIH to develop and implement a strategic plan for research related to autism spectrum disorder. The Director will take into consideration the recommendations of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC). Oversight of the strategic plan and budget for research is based on the existing Autism Research Roadmap and Matrix developed by the IACC. The strategic plan shall require identification of the total expenditures of NIH research activities related to autism spectrum disorder.

The law promotes the expansion, intensification and coordination of activities at NIH related to autism spectrum disorders. It reauthorizes the Autism Centers of Excellence originally created in the Children's Health Act of 2000. The funding may support both basic and clinical research in the fields of developmental neurobiology, genetics, epigenetics, pharmacology, nutrition, immunology, neuroimmunology, neurobehavioral development, endocrinology, gastroenterology, psychopharmacology or toxicology. It also supports continued investigations into the causation, diagnosis, early detection, prevention, control, intervention and cure for autism spectrum disorders. Centers of Excellence also receive funding for coordination of services and information for individuals. The Director of NIH promotes research to determine evidence-based best practices for diagnosis and intervention strategies for individuals with autism spectrum disorder.

The law promotes research initiatives for basic and clinical research of a broad array of environmental factors. The research is coordinated through the Centers of Excellence in Environmental Health and has the same requirements concerning coordinating, reporting and organization as applied to the other Centers of Excellence. The law authorizes \$158 million for each of the fiscal years 2012 through 2014.

The law authorizes the Secretary to establish and provide funding for the collection, storage, coordination, and public availability of data generated from public and private research partnerships. It will also establish a program under which tissue samples, genetic material or biological materials are available for research.

Developmental Disabilities Surveillance and Research Programs

Section 3 (399AA) of the law reauthorizes CDC's epidemiologic surveillance programs and establishes regional Centers of Excellence for collection, analysis and reporting of epidemiological data on autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities. The Centers also assist with the development and coordination of State autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities efforts within a region. This section authorizes CDC to promote research to determine evidence-based best practices for diagnosis and interventions for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities. CARA authorizes \$22 million for each of the fiscal years 2012 through 2014 for a total of \$66 million over that period.

Education, Early Detection, and Intervention

The purpose of section 3 is to increase awareness, reduce barriers to screening and diagnosis, and promote evidence-based early interventions for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities. It also promotes the training of professionals to utilize valid and reliable screening tools to diagnose and provide evidence based interventions. Information will be provided through Federal programs that target individuals and their families (such as Head Start, Early Start, Healthy Start and Medicaid and SCHIP). This section also requires the designation of a lead agency with demonstrated experience and expertise in autism by the Governor of each State to coordinate and provide comprehensive information, education and referral services regarding autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities. It also promotes the development and implementation of valid and reliable screening tools for autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities. Both the Secretary of HHS and the Secretary of Education shall collaborate to provide collection, storage, and coordination of screening tools, educational materials and other products used by Federal programs. CARA authorizes \$48 million for each of the fiscal years 2012 through 2014 for a total of \$144 million over that period.

LEND programs

Under 399BB of section 3, the law authorizes the Secretary, subject to the availability of appropriations, to expand existing interdisciplinary training opportunities or opportunities to increase the number of sites able to diagnose or rule out individuals with autism or other developmental disabilities and ensure that grants are awarded to expand existing or develop new Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) in states that do not have such a program. The Secretary may award one or more grants for technical assistance to the network of interdisciplinary training programs. The Secretary must promote research into additional valid and reliable tools for shortening the time required to confirm or rule out a diagnosis of ASD or other developmental disabilities. The Secretary must also develop guidelines for interventions and disseminate such information. For this section, the law authorizes \$52 million for each of fiscal years 2011 through 2014.

National Institutes of Health

CARA reauthorizes the Autism Center of Excellence program within NIH. The law authorizes \$161 million in 2012 and \$483 million over the 2012-2014 period.

Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee

The CARA reauthorized the "Autism Coordinating Committee" established by the Children's Health Act of 2000. The Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) shall make recommendations concerning the strategic plan for the Autism Road Map and Matrix. The IACC will also develop and annually update advances in autism spectrum disorder research related to causes, early screening, diagnosis, intervention and access to services for individuals with autism spectrum disorder.