

**LEGISLATIVE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON AUTISM**  
**Task Force on Education and Professional Development**  
**December 13, 2006**

**Discussion of Major Problems and Gaps**

The following questions and issues may be helpful to consider when discussing problems and gaps related to the education of children with autism spectrum disorders. They are NOT intended to be proscriptive or to limit innovative discussions and proposals.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS & ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION:

*When you think about the education of children with autism spectrum disorders, what major problems and gaps can you identify?*

Consider the following cross-cutting themes identified during the first commission meeting:

- Public awareness of autism spectrum disorders and the symptoms
- Existence and use of best practices for screening, diagnosis, education, and treatment
- Training and professional development of educators and service providers
- Access to services by underserved populations
- Eligibility criteria for public services
- Health insurance coverage
- Collaboration across public and private service systems
- Adequacy of resources
- Family-focused services and supports
- Systems accountability and measurement of individual outcomes

Consider these issues:

Criticality—Why is this problem important to address? What are the implications for individuals and families, society, the state?

Barriers—What are the specific barriers that contribute to this problem? For example: Does the problem stem from the structure of existing law? Is there a gap not covered by law? Is there an implementation problem? Is there inadequate funding, training, information, coordination, accountability, etc?

State Role—What is the state's role and responsibility to address this problem, including any legal mandates?

Service systems—What are the roles and responsibilities of entities that coordinate or provide services at the local level? Regional centers, public schools, local governments, health care providers, health care plans, non profit agencies and schools, family support organizations, child care and early childhood education providers, and other service providers

Data/Information—What information is available that describes or demonstrates this problem? Who and how many individuals are affected? What information do we wish was available? Is it possible to obtain this information quickly and how? Are there other experts and stakeholders that need to be engaged in this issue?

Vision/Solutions—What is your vision for solving this problem? Are there any successful models to learn from? What specific changes are needed at the state level? At the local level? What is the feasibility of change? Is the idea ready for implementation? Will it require additional resources? Will it require policy development, new technology, or systems change? What are the possible strategies? Are there opportunities to leverage?