

## **Helping Ohioans with Autism Lead Meaningful and Successful Lives**

Autism is a complex neurological developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication, behavior and sensory challenges. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, autism affects 1 in every 88 children in the United States and is the fastest growing developmental disability in the nation. The Kasich Administration is providing funding for innovative projects that will help improve early diagnosis and interventions for individuals with autism.

- **The Autism Diagnostic Education Project (ADEP)** will train pediatricians to correctly identify the early signs of autism. Earlier detection of autism (identification prior to 3 years of age), can result in earlier intervention, which can greatly impact the child's health, development and lifelong outcomes. The ADEP project facilitates unique partnerships between community-based primary care practices and professionals providing early intervention and early childhood services to increase the likelihood that children get a timely and comprehensive diagnostic evaluation. ADEP has already formed these *Diagnostic Partnerships* in 30 counties across Ohio. State funding will help support the existing partnerships and allow for expansion in resource poor regions of the state to increase statewide capacity. The project will be led by Dr. John DUBY, M.D., Director of the Akron Children's Hospital Pediatric Development and Behavior Unit.
- **Funding to support Project PLAY** will be used to train professionals serving infants and toddlers in a play-based approach that nurtures the critical early parent/child relationship. This training opportunity will bring a new level of specialized expertise within county board of developmental disability early intervention programs. These trained professionals will be better equipped to assist and empower families early on, encourage and nurture the child's social interaction and ultimately increase the likelihood of the child enjoying a successful and inclusive life. To date, more than 100 interventionists across 34 counties have received training and follow-up coaching. Funding will be used to reach to at least 80 percent of the state over three years.
- **The Governor's Employment First Executive Order** challenges Ohio to increase the likelihood that youth with developmental disabilities successfully exit high school directly to community integrated employment. State funds will be used to launch a training series for stakeholders to further the understanding and implementation of Employment First. These training opportunities will allow for a diverse group of professionals and families to understand the importance of the critical years, beginning at age 14, which adolescents traverse as they prepare for life beyond high school. Growing the capacity of trained professionals will result in increased awareness of the necessary components and skill development that leads to integrated employment. The Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence will spearhead this work.

Funding for these autism initiatives is made possible through the state's Health Transformation Innovation Fund. A total of \$1.325 million dollars will be made available for these projects.