



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

## Autism Awareness Month

SHIRLEY L. HUNTLEY April 5, 2011

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**News From New York State**

**Senator Shirley L. Huntley**

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### **APRIL IS AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH**

#### **Senator Shirley L. Huntley supports Autism Advocacy**

Senator Shirley L. Huntley (D-Jamaica) recognizes April as Autism Awareness Month and encourages New Yorkers to learn more about autism and its effects on children and their families, as well as what can be done to help the cause.

Since the 1970s, April has been designated by the National Autism Society as National Autism Awareness Month in order to highlight the growing need for concern and awareness about autism. Only recently, however, has autism become a focus of the national conscious as rates have skyrocketed.

Autism is a neural development disorder, indicators of the disorder include impaired social interaction and communication, and also by restricted and repetitive behavior. According to the Center for Disease Control, just three decades ago only 3.5 children out of every 10,000

were diagnosed with autism. However, the senator notes that current rates indicate 1 in every 110 children is afflicted.

Autism is a developmental disorder that affects many children and families across New York State and the nation. The rates of children with Autism have been increasing over the decades, and more and more parents have to find ways to pay for varied types of treatment and therapy for their Autistic children.

The Senator recognizes this increase and supports learning more about the disorder and the implications it has on the life of the children with the disorder, and the families that care for them. Some ways you can do this include:

- Hosting an awareness event (visit [www.1power4autism.org](http://www.1power4autism.org)).
- Showing your colors by wearing the autism awareness puzzle bracelet (visit [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)).
- Passing out informational materials to your community (visit [www.autism-society.org/shopdownloads](http://www.autism-society.org/shopdownloads)).
- Taking action by getting involved with advocacy efforts (visit [www.vote4autism.org](http://www.vote4autism.org)).

Senator Huntley has also played a role in raising Autism Awareness and helping parents access treatment options through legislation she has sponsored. Senate bill (S. 6123) provides parents insurance coverage to treat their children who are diagnosed with Autism. Parents and families often have to rely on Medicaid and pay out of pocket for occupational therapy and other treatments. These out of pocket expenses can have a debilitating effect on a family's finances. The bill also raises awareness for adults with Autism because they could also gain access to speech training and other educational rehabilitative treatments.

Senator Huntley also held an Autism Forum in October of 2009 inviting parents, advocates, and others to speak about the current state of Autism awareness and education, treatment options, and difficulties gaining proper insurance coverage

“Autism is a disorder that affects many children and families, however, for most people it is a disorder that is very hard to understand,” said Senator Huntley. “By dedicating the month of April to raising awareness, we increase the ability of parents and caregivers to properly identify the signs of autism and give these children the proper attention they deserve.”

Early identification of the signs of autism in children is vital to helping the children and their parents understand the disorder and how to effectively take action. Research has indicated that the earlier a child is diagnosed, the sooner they can benefit from one of the specialized intervention approaches to treatment and education.

For more information about autism, please visit [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org) or [www.cdc.gov/autism](http://www.cdc.gov/autism)