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**Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
Gary Daniels, Secretary**

Senate Education Committee
April 24, 2006

**Services for Children Ages 0 - 5
Early Childhood Intervention for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

Research has shown early intervention can significantly improve outcomes for children with autism, and reduce the long term financial cost for the State of Kansas. Diagnosis and treatment of autism has been shown to be most effective when addressed in the early developmental years, allowing a child to become as independent as possible and transition to adulthood being self-sufficient.

Primary services that are needed to meeting the needs of these children would include:

- Case Management to coordinate the necessary services for the child and assist the family in caring for their child;
- Respite Care to give the primary care givers (parents) a short time away to take care of necessary business and to care for themselves;
- Expanded speech therapy and physical therapy; and
- Social skills training.

SRS estimates that to begin a program to serve this group of children the fiscal impact would be as follows:

- \$600,000 SGF, \$1,521,298AF for FY 2007 to serve 100 children. This would be for a 6 month period. The earliest that a program could be implemented would be January 1, 2007;
- For a full year the cost would be \$1,200,000 SGF, \$3,042,596 AF
- This would be an average monthly cost of \$2,535.00 per child, or \$30,426.00 per year per child.

Other services that are necessary would be accessed through the Medicaid State Plan, i.e. positive behavior supports and mental health services.

To provide services to children ages 0-5 with Autism or other significant behavioral challenges, a Home and Community Based Services Waiver could be developed that would provide the intensive, targeted services to meet the early learning and developmental needs of these children. Many children with autism in this age group are not Medicaid eligible due to the level of parental income; thereby do not have access to the level of service needed. With a waiver, parental income could be waived, and the child would then be eligible for Medicaid and waiver services.

There is also the possibility of using state plan services that would be offered through the Deficit Reduction to use a buy-in program for families.

At age 3, children with autism have access to services through the educational system. Services provided through education would include therapies as well as developmental educational services. Services through the schools would not include the level of case management that is needed or respite care that assists a family to cope with the everyday needs of a child with autism.

SRS has supported in past years and continues to support, through enhancement requests and budget submissions, exploring a Home and Community Based Services autism waiver program for children ages 0-5.