

Children's Mental Health Awareness week is May 7-13, 2017. Throughout the week there will be ongoing events nationwide aimed at educating people about the importance of prevention and early identification of mental health challenges in children. Stigma around mental health is a significant barrier preventing children, youth, and families with mental health challenges from seeking treatment. Children's Mental Health Awareness seeks to raise conversations about mental health to reduce stigma.

Last year during CMH awareness week Central Counties Child/Adolescent Mental Health division hosted our first 5K fun run/walk event aimed at raising awareness and reducing the stigma of mental health for children. The event was held in Temple at Pepper Creek Trail. This year, we are proud to host our Second Annual Children's Mental Health Awareness 5K Fun Run/Walk. The event will take place at Miller Park in Temple. At the event this year, we will host a butterfly release. Communities statewide will release live or paper wind-up butterflies during the month of May. The butterflies represent the freedom from stigma, and hope and beauty after a long, hard journey.



The public within our five county catchment area of Bell, Milam, Lampasas, Coryell, and Hamilton counties are invited to attend. The event will take place 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., Saturday, May 20, 2017. You may register for the 5K event in advance or the day of the event from 8:00 am to 8:45 am. We will have informational booths set up with providers and resources from the community whom serve children with mental health issues. There will also be fun activities for kids. The fun run/walk and all activities are free for anyone that attends. For more information, contact us at (254-778-7995) or [stefanie.waugh@cccmhmr.org](mailto:stefanie.waugh@cccmhmr.org). Registration forms are available online at [centralcountiesservices.org](http://centralcountiesservices.org).

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Children's Mental Health Awareness 5K Fun Run/Walk

By Stefanie Waugh, CMHS,  
Central Counties Services



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**24/7 Toll Free Crisis Line:**  
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Serving the residents of Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, and Milam Counties since 1967.

**Our Mission:**  
Improving the lives of  
the people we serve.

**Our Vision:**  
A community where all people grow and  
develop in a healthy and  
vigorous way.

Central Counties Services  
Board of Trustees  
meets at 6:30 p.m.  
on the fourth Tuesday  
of every month.



## April is a chance to learn about Autism, Autism Spectrum Disorder

By Kristen Zajicek, IDD, Central Counties Services

April officially kicks off autism awareness month. Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is a developmental disability that is characterized by challenges in the areas of social skills, speech and language skills, and sensory and motor skills. Other characteristics of autism include repetitive behaviors, narrow interests, difficulty with executive functioning, and difficulty holding conversations.

Autism is considered a spectrum disorder due to the wide variations of challenges and strengths posed by each individual with autism. Dr. Stephen Shore, a professor, researcher, advocate, writer, and husband who is also diagnosed with ASD has a famous quote, "If you met 1 person with autism - you met 1 person with autism".

As of this date, there is no known cause for ASD, however, researchers agree that ASD is caused by abnormalities in the brain. Researchers continue in the attempts to identify genetic and environmental components that can explain the cause of ASD.

**Autism, continued on page 2.**



Autism, continued from page 1.

FACTS ABOUT AUTISM (Source: Autism Speaks):

- Center for Disease Control estimates 1 in 68 children have ASD
- 1 in 42 boys; 1 in 189 girls
- 1/3 of the ASD population remain nonverbal
- 2/3 of individuals with ASD do NOT have an intellectual disability, however, some of this population could be nonverbal
- Other medical or mental health issues that frequently accompany autism: Gastrointestinal disorders, seizures, sleep disturbance, ADHD, phobias, and anxiety.

There are many different types of treatment options for individuals with ASD. Some common types of treatment include Applied Behavior Analysis, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Cognitive Behavior Therapy, and medication management by a medical team. Researchers agree that early intervention is the key to reducing the core behavioral symptoms of ASD.

How do we at Central Counties Services support individuals with ASD? The Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) department can provide intervention for children ages birth to 3 years. The Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Services (IDD) Department provides services such as behavior supports, with the primary focus being Applied Behavior Analysis. Other services include community support services, day habilitation, respite, crisis intervention services. At times it may be appropriate to join forces with the Behavioral Health department for skills training and medication management. Central Counties Services also currently operates two 1115 waiver projects, Breakthru Central and Breakthru Finishline, with a focus on social skills training and work adjustment specifically for adults with ASD.

While April is considered Autism Awareness Month, let us join in together in supporting the understanding and acceptance of individuals with ASD all year.

For more information please contact the IDD Department at 254-770-2336.

**24/7 Toll Free Crisis Line:**  
**1.800.888.4036**

**Toll Free Non-Emergency Line:**  
**844.815.6221**



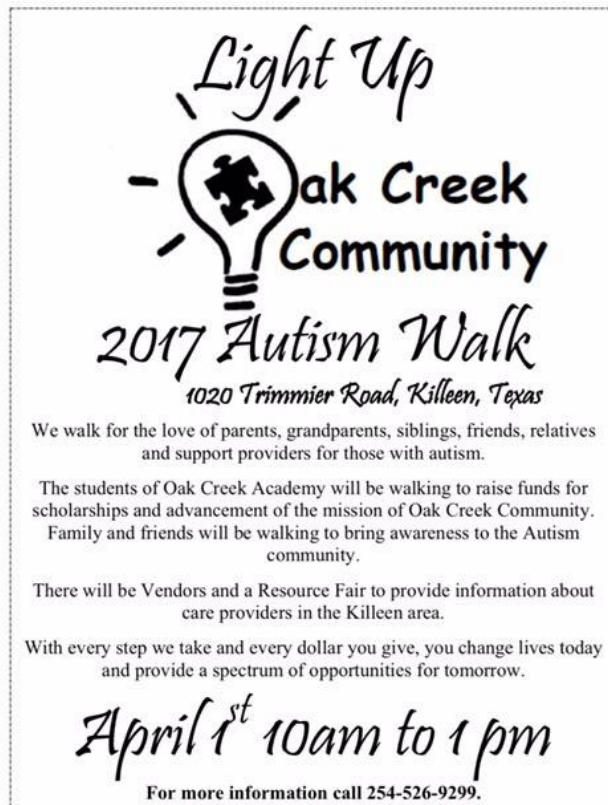
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of the  
people we serve.**

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## State funding cuts could affect thousands of disabled children

By Brittney Verner, KXXV News 25

As lawmakers continue to negotiate funding cuts throughout the state, this could mean some major changes are coming to businesses that serve disabled children.

Over the past few years the state has decreased funding for the Texas Early Childhood Intervention Program and now parents are concerned this could soon effect the services they receive.

Richard and Shannon Prausa are first time parents of baby Eric who was diagnosed with Down syndrome at birth. Common traits include low muscle tone and developmental delays, which is why they value the therapy services they receive from ECI.

"We work a lot on his core strength because building his core strength then helps build the rest of him," Shannon said.

The Prausa's receive weekly home based therapy visits just like thousands of other toddlers who have developmental delays. These services have been proven to increase a child's ability to reach developmental milestones, which later reduces the need for pricey special education services once they reach elementary school.

"ECI provides us things that we may not have been able to learn normally as parents - it's just been an incredible asset for us," Richard said.

Since 2011, the state has constantly decreased funding for these services and Julie Fielder, Program Director for ECI that serves Bell County said this creates extra strain on the administration.

"I think our greatest concern is what's going to happen with the legislature and what the funding is going to look like for next year. We do know that the reduction in funds for our program will be about \$55,000 dollars per year in Medicaid services alone," Fielder said.

However, organizers said it's still unclear how deeply additional funding cuts will impact the program overall. Fielder also said regardless of whether legislatures decide to reduce funds or keep them the same it could still potentially affect the opportunity for growth, and limit services offered to almost 500 children throughout central Texas.

Currently Texas ECI ranks 45 in the nation as far as providing services to children from birth to 3-years-old. Organizers said they want to continue to provide high quality services to families that's why they're asking for local legislatures to support full funding for the services.

Fielder said if children meet state eligibility the ECI is required to service them because they're an entitlement service but depending on the funding outcome it could stretch services especially thin.

The Prausas, along with many other families who receive services from ECI, are hopeful those services will continue.

"As a first time parent and a parent of a special needs child I just can say enough about what ECI does for us it would be a travesty if ECI services got cut," Shannon said.

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**The Prausa family works with an ECI therapist to help their son, Eric, who has Down syndrome. Photo: KXXV News 25.**