



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – John M. Colmers, Secretary

Office of Communications

*David Paulson
Karen Black
410-767-6490*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Autism Commission to Meet on Shore, Seek Public Comment *Easton gathering on April 20 designed to gain community perspective*

BALTIMORE, MD (April 14, 2010) -- The first in a series of four regional fact finding sessions to help the Maryland Commission on Autism gain public input on how Autism Spectrum Disorder impacts the community will be held in Easton on Tuesday, April 20 beginning at 9:30 a.m., the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) have announced.

The meeting, which will run to 12:30 p.m., will be held at Krystal Q Reception Hall and Catering, located at 9630 Technology Drive in Easton.

DHMH Secretary John M. Colmers will read a proclamation issued by Governor Martin O'Malley on April 1 that declares April as Autism Awareness Month.

"There is no silver bullet we can provide a child to make autism disappear," Secretary Colmers said. "With proper diagnosis and a continuum of care, Maryland can and will help families affected by an autism-related diagnosis to better meet the challenges they face."

During the meeting, Commission members will hear panel presentations from persons impacted by autism on the Eastern Shore and informational presentations on Early Intervention and Funding. The members are most interested in learning more about the status of existing education and service systems, needs that are not adequately addressed and steps the public feels can best help Maryland move forward.

"Early intervention and educational services are key to helping children with autism," said State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick. "By putting a spotlight on the disorder, we believe that more parents and families will find the resources they need."

The 26-member Commission was formed in 2009 by the Maryland General Assembly (SB 963) and is chaired by DHMH Deputy Secretary Renata J. Henry and Carol Ann Heath, MSDE Assistant State Superintendent, who serves as vice chair.

“The commission is working to evaluate how to best facilitate and coordinate research opportunities among Maryland's vast institutional, educational and public health resources,” said Deputy Secretary Henry. “We believe that if we can help advance serious research in all areas of autism, we will help every family that deals with autism.”

At the April 20 gathering, people from the community will have an opportunity to comment from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Participants are asked to limit their presentation to no more than three minutes. For those who are unable to attend or wish to respond in writing, written testimony may be e-mailed to Diane Dressler at dresslerd@dhmh.state.md.us or by mail to:

Maryland Commission on Autism
c/o Diane Dressler
201 West Preston St., 4th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21201

Other community meetings will be held in July, October and January at locations and dates still to be determined.

Public health officials, educators and families have cited a growing concern over the steady increase of individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The state has seen a 57 percent increase in the number of autism-related diagnoses from 2002 to 2006.

Information about meetings and the Commission can be found on the Autism Commission Web site at <http://dhmh.maryland.gov/autism/> .

The Commission is scheduled to submit preliminary findings and recommendations for a state plan to the General Assembly by June 1, 2011, with a final report due on June 1, 2012.

* * * * *

Directions to Krystal Q Reception Hall and Catering:

On Route 50 approaching from the Bay Bridge:

In Easton, turn right onto Airport Road (located at Easton Airport)
Travel 4/10ths of a mile and turn right onto Technology Drive
Krystal Q is on the right at 9630 Technology Drive

On Route 50 approaching from Cambridge/Salisbury:

In Easton, turn left onto Airport Road (located at Easton Airport)
Travel 4/10ths of a mile and turn right onto Technology Drive
Krystal Q is on the right at 9630 Technology Drive

###