

TELEPHONE:
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Pacific Association for Autistic Citizens

#107 - 395 WEST BROADWAY
VANCOUVER, B.C. V5Y 1P8

November 6 1984.

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Dear Representative:

We have not previously requested financial help from a Labour Organization in British Columbia. However, perhaps if you know of our circumstances and the needs of our children either your organization or individual members will be willing to give us a hand.

Every day an entire world of discovery is lost to an autistic child, unless we help. All of us.

Your support can promote early diagnosis, appropriate education, services and research into this challenging behaviour syndrome. As P.A.A.C. has only a small operating grant from the Ministry of Human Resources, funding must be found for all projects.

Last year, due to the generosity of donors and also, notably, the media, the Vancouver Sun and CKNW, some new and significant accomplishments were made possible in addition to our regular programs:

- a) Four Camps: - and, for the first time it was possible to separate the younger children from the older ones.
- b) Early Diagnosis Project

Early indicators in Autism were identified and this information was sent throughout the Province to many categories of resources and diagnostic personnel, who come into contact with autistic children early in the child's life. The feedback has been invaluable.

c) Communication Conference

Liaising with Speech and Hearing professionals who are very importantly connected with the developmental processes of autistic children, we organized our first Communication Conference. It was most successful, bringing forth a great deal of information and bringing together many multi-disciplinary professionals concerned with our children as well as offering instruction to parents.

This year, with your help some of further new projects we wish and need to pursue are

a) Vocational Survey

b) Resources Manual

c) Early Diagnosis Project Part II, which will concentrate on information to Physicians

d) Communication Conference II This conference would deal with therapeutic methodology and the whole spectrum of Autism from low functioning to high functioning.

e) Communication Camp For parents and siblings to assist them in improving communication methods with the autistic child.

f) Physical Fitness Program This program is based on the evidence that recent systematic programming of physical exercise in the Autistic child's day reduces inappropriate behaviours, promotes their general physical well-being, coordination, and can positively influence attention-span as well as social interaction.

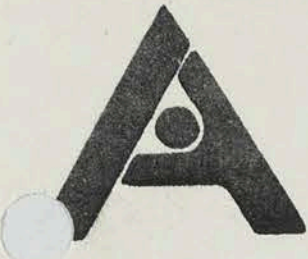
This year our financial situation is even more strained than ever before. Please help us to help these severely handicapped children. Should you care to have a speaker for one of your meetings to learn more about our children or our organization, P.A.A.C. would be pleased to send one along.

Sincerely,


Sylvia Banyan
Executive Director

Enclosures: 'What is Autism?'; Fund Raising Sheet,

P.S. If it is your custom to donate to the United Way you may not be aware that it is possible to designate to non United Way organizations as donee. We would be most grateful in this event if you would so designate us.



WHAT IS AUTISM ?

The syndrome of Autism is a developmental disability which is defined and diagnosed behaviorally. Signs and symptoms appear before 30 months of age and indicate disturbance in each of the following areas:

- 1) Developmental rates and sequences - Normal coordination of the three developmental pathways (i.e. motor, social-adaptive, language-cognitive) is disrupted by delays, arrests and/or regressions among or within one or more of the pathways.
- 2) Responses to sensory stimuli - They may be generalized over-or under-reactivity or alternations of these two states. One or more sensory systems are involved, e.g., sight, hearing, touch, pain, balance, position, smell and taste.
- 3) Development of speech, language-cognition, and non verbal communication - Speech may be absent (mutism) or delayed in onset with persistent immature inflections, syntax, and articulation. Language-cognitive deficits include absent or limited ability to use symbols, only specific capacities may be present, failure to develop the use of abstract terms, concepts, and reasoning, echolalia, and/or absence or delayed development of the appropriate use of gestures, dissociation of gestures and language, and/or failure to assign conventional symbolic meaning to gestures.
- 4) Relationships to people and objects - These are manifested by the failure to develop normal respnsivity to people and to use objects appropriately (to assign proper symbolic or thematic meaning to objects).

The syndrome is caused by an underlying physical dysfunction within the brain, the exact nature of which is as yet unknown. It occurs alone or in association with mental retardation and other disorders known to affect the brain.

The syndrome occurs approximately 20-21 times per 10,000 births and is 4 to 5 times more common in males. It afflicts persons in all parts of the world, of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, and all social classes. Studies of families with autistic persons have failed to identify any unique features, including personality characteristics and IQ.

Although autistic persons live a normal life span, the syndrome is severely incapacitating. Symptoms change over the course of time and periodic medical evaluations and special educational programs are required. Facilities with behaviorally structured developmentally appropriate programs have been demonstrated to be most helpful.

As with other physical disabilities, family counseling, supportive psycho-therapy and medication to decrease symptoms may enhance social-adaptive functioning in specific patients.

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