

Embargoed for release:
October 5, 2009
5:00 AM Central

Contact: Karen McDonough
Executive Director
Autism Society of Illinois
(630) 691-1270

Autism Society of Illinois needs donations and volunteers to answer increasing demand Responds to results of Children's Health Survey

Lombard, IL (October 5, 2009) The Autism Society of Illinois confirmed increasing demand for services and information as a result of a rise in the number of cases of autism within the state. A national report released Monday in the journal *Pediatrics* reveals that 1 percent of U.S. children ages 3-17 have an autism spectrum disorder, an estimated prevalence of 1 in every 91 children. This is a dramatic increase from the one in 150 prevalence rates currently reported.

Autism Society of Illinois Executive Director Karen McDonough said, "We believed the federal effort would reveal what many of us 'in the trenches' have long felt...that autism is a national health crisis. Here in Illinois, significant resources must be directed toward screening and diagnosis, affordable interventions that treat the whole person and comprehensive education plans to foster lifelong skill development so that people with autism will have the ability to work and live independently."

Demand for information and referrals has grown steadily, according to figures from the Autism Society of Illinois. The number of families who phone ASI with questions increased 70% since 2007. Most of the calls come from parents who have just had a child diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder or from families trying to plan for an adult child with autism.

"The Autism Society of Illinois is the first stop for families seeking answers," said McDonough. She continued, "Despite the enthusiastic support of our board and members, we are simply swamped with families looking for help. We want to answer every call and provide every family with the information and referrals they need. Our budget is far too limited to make the kind of difference we need to make. At this time we are calling upon our statewide community to support us with volunteers and donations to help us answer the crisis here in Illinois."

ASI is a leading voice and resource for the Illinois autism community supporting families in the area of education, advocacy, services and supports. More information about the Autism Society of Illinois is available at www.autismillinois.org, at ASI's headquarters (630) 691-1270 or toll free at (888) 691-1270. Donations can be sent to the Society at 2200 S. Main St., Suite 205, Lombard, IL 60148-5366.

The national report released Monday is entitled "Prevalence of Parent-Reported Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder Among Children in the U.S." It was conducted by the Department of

Health and Human Services National Survey of Children's Health, using data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The report was conducted via a telephone survey of over 78,000 parents, and determined a point prevalence of 110 per 10,000 respondents, roughly 1 percent of the population of children in the United States.

##