



Dear Provider:

In March 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released an alarming report citing that the incidence of autism continues to increase with 1 in 88 adults and 1 in 68 children having a diagnosis<sup>1</sup>. Many of those with autism also have a co-occurring mental health disorder. In a study of 112 children diagnosed with autism, 70% had at least one comorbid disorder and 41% of the same sample had at least two comorbid disorders<sup>2</sup>.

To help address these challenges in treating this complex patient population, Beacon Health Options (Beacon) has convened a task force comprised of leadership from the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, Department of Developmental Services, family advocates, and Beacon and MBHP leadership with the goal of developing a new vision for program design and service delivery. One of the Beacon's strategies is the creation of a Center of Excellence for Co-Occurring Autism and Behavioral Health Disorders (COE-ABHD).

Beacon believes that creating the COE-ABHD, will improve access and care delivery to those with autism and co-occurring mental health disorders. The COE-ABHD will create additional certification criteria to identify a cohort of behavioral health providers who have expertise in treating autism. As the number of children and adults diagnosed with autism continues to rise, it is vital that we create a strong infrastructure to support individuals and their families. We believe that creating a Center Of Excellence is the first step to improve care for this population.

Before developing these additional criteria, the task force is issuing a request for information (RFI) aimed at learning about your current treatment of this unique patient population. Your input is critical to this process and will assist us as we continue to develop the certification criteria for this new and exciting Center of Excellence model. Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete the RFI. It can be accessed at the following link:

<http://www.beaconhealthoptions.com/behavioral-health-excellence/>.

If you have any questions, we will be holding two information sessions. All are welcome to attend. Below are the dates and locations.

Thursday, July 9, 2015 1:00pm-3:00pm Beacon Health Options 500 Unicorn Park Drive, Suite 103 Woburn, MA 01801	Friday, July 10, 2015 10:00am-12:00pm Beacon Health Options 200 State Street, Suite 300 Boston, MA 02109
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<sup>1</sup> "Facts About ASD." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 20 Mar. 2014. Web.

<sup>2</sup> Simonoff, E., Pickles, A., Charman, T., Chandler, S., Loucas, T., & Baird, G. (2008). Psychiatric disorders in children with autism spectrum disorder: prevalence, comorbidity, and associated factors in a population derived sample. *Journal of the Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 47(8), 921-929.

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If you cannot make the information session and still have additional questions, please contact Mark Deasy or Moira Muir at Beacon Health Options. The survey can be returned via email to [Caitlin.Masters@Beaconhs.com](mailto:Caitlin.Masters@Beaconhs.com) under the subject line of COE-ABHD.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Deasy".

Mark Deasy  
781-994-7177  
[Mark.Deasy@Beaconhs.com](mailto:Mark.Deasy@Beaconhs.com)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Moira Muir".

Moira Muir  
617-350-1913  
[Moira.Muir@valueoptions.com](mailto:Moira.Muir@valueoptions.com)

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