



# FACT SHEET

The Consensus for Autism Family Connection Initiative is a program designed to bring families of children diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) together with legislators and public advocates for the purpose of promoting awareness and understanding of life with an ASD. This initiative is a way to offer a first-person account to policy makers and opinion leaders who might not otherwise see the challenges, joys and struggles associated with having an ASD.

Below are just a few of the ways that a family using services provided by The Autism Program of Illinois Service Network partners can share their story through the Consensus for Autism Family Connection initiative:

- Your family will be matched with your local legislators to share your story with them to ensure that they understand the impact that loss of funding for ASD services will create
- Join monthly conference calls to hear updates on legislative activities, including bills being discussed, tips on how to meet with your local legislator, ways to participate, etc.
- Travel to the Capitol on May 21 for Developmental Disabilities Rally Day to support TAP and full funding for ASD services by meeting with your legislators in person
- Learn how to effectively meet with legislators to promote bills and regulations that support ASD programs and services
- Become your family's own reporter and learn tips on how to write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper to generate awareness and understanding of ASDs
- Engage area organizations in partnering with your local TAP Service Network partner by speaking at their meetings, socials, or other community events
- Learn how to load family photos and share updates online for your matched legislators on a private and invitation-only Flickr account
- Have your family's story and portrait shared in a photo lookbook to be printed and distributed to legislators
- Opportunity to share your story in *ME Magazine*, a bi-annual publication from The Hope Institute for Children and Families
- Participate in trainings, social events, community partnerships, skill-building workshops and activities throughout your involvement (about one year)

**IF YOUR FAMILY RECEIVES SERVICES FROM THE AUTISM PROGRAM OF ILLINOIS (TAP) AND YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS INITIATIVE, PLEASE CONTACT FARAH SALIM AT [FSALIM@THEHOPEINSTITUTE.US](mailto:FSALIM@THEHOPEINSTITUTE.US) OR (217) 588-7661.**