

## NJDOE News

**For More Information Contact the Public Information Office:**  
**Richard Vespucci**  
**Kathryn Forsyth, Director**  
**609-292-1126**

**For Release: October 24, 2006**

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### **Governor's Initiative on Autism Offers \$15 Million in Grants to Schools**

New Jersey school districts now have the opportunity to apply for state grants to establish, expand or enhance their programs and services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. A notice of grant opportunity for the Governor's Initiative on Autism has been posted on the Department of Education Web-site. Applications are due on December 14, 2006.

"During a time when we are faced with severe fiscal constraints, we have found ways to protect and support our most vulnerable citizens," said Governor Jon S. Corzine, who established the Governor's Initiative on Autism. "With these grants, children with autism will benefit from the additional resources aimed at enriching and improving their academic experiences. I strongly urge educators to take advantage of this new opportunity."

In the fiscal 2007 budget, Governor Corzine also included an additional \$4.5 million for grants to address other special education needs. DOE will issue a notice of grant opportunity for this initiative in upcoming months.

"Governor Corzine has made a strong commitment to serving the needs of children with autism spectrum disorders," said Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy. "I am confident that these grants will help ensure that districts that have seen notable increases in the number of students with autism receive the support they need."

Approximately 7,400 New Jersey children between the ages of five and 21 have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. Individuals with autism have marked deficits in attention, imitation, communication, socialization, and motivation – skills that are the foundation for early education. In order to address these needs, educators must develop and implement an early and intensive educational experience to provide opportunities for all students to learn.

Through the grant initiative, Governor Corzine seeks to address some of the immediate needs of school districts that operate or plan to operate programs for students with autism spectrum disorder. Districts will be able to use these funds for planning and start-up activities, as well as program expansion and enhancement, including professional development, program coordination, behavior intervention, parent outreach, transition planning, and instructional support.

Grant funds have been allocated in three categories:

- \$8 million to establish new programs, with a maximum single award of \$850,000;
- \$5 million to expand existing programs, with a maximum single award of \$750,000; and
- \$2 million to enhance existing programs, with a maximum single award of \$225,000.

The Governor's Initiative on Autism is a competitive grant program, open to local school districts and regional special education public school providers, such as special services school districts, educational services commissions and jointure commissions. A technical assistance workshop is scheduled for Thursday, November 2, 2006 at the Holiday Inn, National Conference Center, in East Windsor. Interested applicants can register online at:

<https://homeroom5.doe.state.nj.us/events/>

The grant program will run for 15 months, from April 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008.

The Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) is posted on the New Jersey Department of Education Web-site at:

[www.nj.gov/njded/grants/gropps.shtml](http://www.nj.gov/njded/grants/gropps.shtml)

For the grant application to be complete, the NGO must be used in combination with the Discretionary Grant Application, available online at:

[www.nj.gov/njded/grants/discretionary/apps/](http://www.nj.gov/njded/grants/discretionary/apps/)