



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

OCT 09 2011

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am signing Senate Bill 946. It requires health plans and insurers to provide behavioral health treatments for individuals with autism and pervasive developmental disorder. The new law is effective as of July 1, 2012, and expires July 1, 2014.

While this bill provides relief for families of autistic children and some clarity for health plans, insurers and providers, there are remaining questions about effectiveness, duration, and the cost of the covered treatments that must be sorted out.

Under national health care reform, the federal government will establish "essential health benefits." If the coverage established by this bill is not included as an essential benefit, the mandate of Senate Bill 946 will automatically expire.

The Institute of Medicine said in its recent report that the top priority in defining the essential health benefits is finding the right balance between making coverage available for people to get the care they need and doing so at a cost we can all afford. The report also emphasized the need to distinguish services and treatments that are medical from those that are not.

There is still much work to be done.

Sincerely,

  
Edmund G. Brown Jr.