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Local News

Colin Price, The Province / Jean Lewis wants to make Lovaas therapy available to all parents of autistic children.

# Bid to finance autism therapy

Suzanne Fournier, Staff Reporter The Province

Four Lower Mainland couples are fighting a legal battle on behalf of their autistic children that could benefit up to 1,200 families in B.C.

The families are suing the B.C. ministries of education, children and families, and health in a bid to get the B.C. government to pick up the tab for an expensive but proven method of intensive therapy pioneered by California psychologist Dr. Ivar Lovaas.

Sabrina Freeman, executive director of FEAT-B.C. (Families for Early Autism Treatment), said her 12-year-old autistic daughter is now in a regular Grade 6 class after years of Lovaas treatment, begun when Freeman heard of the Lovaas method while a student in California.

"Before Lovaas therapy, she would literally sing loudly 24 hours a day, yet she didn't know who I was," said Freeman. "Now she's getting a report card and is going to birthday parties."

Lawyer Chris Hinkson, acting for Freeman and three other families, is asking B.C. Supreme Court Justice Marion Allan to declare Lovaas therapy medically necessary for the treatment of autism and compel the B.C. government to pay the costs of up to \$60,000 a year per child.

Hinkson is arguing that failure to pay for Lovaas treatment is a violation of the Canadian Charter rights of autistic children to equal medical treatment and quality of life.

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