

Parents fight for autistic son

Dear Editor:

I am writing in frustration against a government system that was created to help children in the Okanagan.

Our son has autism, a neurological disorder that affects the areas of communication and social interaction. It makes it hard for him to communicate or understand. He doesn't learn the way other children do. But he can learn if taught a special way. That way is Lovaas-type applied behavior analysis.

Both Jeremy's doctors have written letters to the government prescribing the need for this treatment for our son's neurological disorder. Yet here, in the Okanagan, the regional personnel act as if they don't care and certainly don't seem to realize how important this treatment is for our son.

Lovaas autism treatment is the only scientifically backed, medically endorsed method of treating autism. It has shown to benefit all autistic children. Our son is showing dramatic gains in the 8 1/2 months that he has

been in the therapy.

This is in direct contrast to his regression when he was involved in the standard government programs. Yet, the bureaucrats here in the Okanagan refuse to even inquire about this treatment program.

It seems they would rather see our son condemned to live in a full-care facility and lead a life of dependency rather than provide him an opportunity for a life of independence.

There are more than 100 families in B.C. doing the Lovaas therapy and we are aware that many are receiving funding from their regional offices. Many of these families have had their funding renewed as recently as this month.

The regional offices in the Lower Mainland support and cooperate with families doing Lovaas to the benefit of the children. Yet the bureaucrats here don't seem willing to educate themselves or cooperate in any way with us for the future well being of our son.

Our son's funding is and was available but only available now if we use it toward their "interventions" which are nothing more than baby sitting services. These interventions also have no data or scientific support for them.

Why is it easier for us to put our son in full-time daycare, foster care or an institution than it is to use a small portion of that money to provide him a treatment program that will help him to become a productive member of our society? Why, instead of being rewarded for trying to help our son reach his maximum potential, are we being punished?

Ignorance about autism and the treatment of autism is the answer to that. While we may be only 100 miles from the Lower Mainland regions that provide help to the autistic children in Lovaas programs, in terms of attitude, empathy, a willingness to learn and to really help these children, we are some 30 years behind.

Joe Rodrigues,