

## Opinion

## Family trying to obtain effective treatment for autistic son

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 which affects the areas of communication and social interaction. It makes it hard for him to communicate or understand. He doesn't learn from his environment the way other children do. But our son can learn if taught a special way. That way is Lovaas-type Applied Behavior Analysis. This treatment is the only scientifically proven method of teaching children with autism. It is the only treatment with scientific data to back its ability.

Both of 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 involved 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 eight and half 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. They are ignoring the medical advice of Jeremy's doctors. 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 future and a life of independence.

There are well over 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 provide support and cooperation towards these families doing Lovaas to the

benefit of the children. Yet the bureaucrats here in the Okanagan, don't seem willing to educate themselves or cooperate in any way with us for the future well being of our son.

This treatment program is very detailed and intensive. My wife, Barbara should be able to devote all of her time to our son and his program. Unfortunately, she is unable to do that now because she is forced to spend part of each day writing letters, picketing, updating our information web site and trying to get our son's

funding returned. Funding that is and was available to our son but only available now if we use it towards their interventions which are nothing more than babysitting 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 day-care, foster care or an institu-

tion 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, we are being punished? Ignorance about Autism and the treatment of

autism is the answer to that. While we may be only hundreds of miles from the Lower Mainland Regions that are still providing 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 thirty years behind.

I hope you will print this letter with our web address at

<http://digital-web.net/FEATbc/penticton/> so that people can visit the site and read the whole story.

I thank you in advance for the opportunity to express my frustration concerning this important matter.

Joe Rodrigues  
Penticton

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