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## The OPEN MINDS Circle

### Evidence-Based Autism Treatment Now "the Rule" in California Regional Centers

As of August 1, 2009, autism treatment provided by California's 21 state-funded regional centers must be limited to evidence-based practices. The regional centers are prohibited from providing or funding any experimental treatments that have not been clinically determined or scientifically proven as an effective and safe treatment as determined by the "National Autism Standards Report" released by the National Autism Center. This measure, enacted in response to the state's budget crisis, has provider organizations impaled between two conflicting bills—The Lanterman Act and The Trailer Bill.

For one, the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has experienced increased demand for services due to The Lanterman Act, which focuses on providing services to meet the needs of all consumers with developmental disabilities without regard for cost or a uniform service continuum across regional centers. On the other hand, The Trailer Bill—an amendment to the Lanterman Act limits the types of services that can be delivered to this consumer population to those deemed evidence-based, though it neglects to define the level of evidence needed to accept a treatment or service as "evidence-based."

One discontinued program for autism treatment, called Developmental, Individual Difference (DIR), has become the focus of a class action lawsuit, *Benito R. vs. Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center*. The Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center (ELARC) had offered DIR for 10 years, though the treatment was deemed non-evidence-based. The plaintiffs seek a preliminary injunction to force ELARC to reinstate funding for DIR treatment programs that were terminated.

I think we can expect to see a movement by funders to look for empirical evidence of treatment effectiveness. The problem is not in calculating the cost, but in defining "effectiveness." For more, check out "[California Amendment to Lanterman Act Limits Autism Treatment Funding to Evidence-Based Practices](#)," *all members*. And, if you'd like to share your perspective on the subject, just send a message to [openminds@openminds.com](mailto:openminds@openminds.com).

Sincerely,  
Terry Griffin  
Manager, OPEN MINDS On-Line News