



October 20, 2016

Dear College and University Representative,

The Autism Insurance Law (Act 62 of 2008) established a licensing process for individuals who provide behavior specialist services to children and adolescents with autism in Pennsylvania. As a result, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of State (DOS) are sending this letter to accredited colleges and universities to inform them of the need for comprehensive graduate programs designed to enable graduates to obtain a Behavior Specialist license upon graduation. Comprehensive graduate programs would allow an applicant for a Behavior Specialist license to fulfill all of the educational, training, and experiential requirements for the license, prior to graduation.

The number of children with autism in Pennsylvania is expected to grow significantly, and the need for qualified professionals to work with this population will also increase. Because you are one of Pennsylvania's leading educational institutions, our Departments think that you may be interested in enhancing your existing programs or developing a new program to meet this need.

A program that enables students to graduate ready to apply for the license would include the following components:

- A Master's (or higher) degree or a Post Master's Certificate in certain specified fields;
- 90 hours of evidence-based coursework in eight specified content areas;
- 1,000 hours of supervised direct clinical experience; and
- One year of experience involving Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs).

The attached guidance includes additional information on each of these requirements; provides information on how to enhance or develop content area coursework; clarifies what does and does not qualify toward the 90-hour coursework requirement; and lists acceptable methods for students to meet the experience requirements.

DHS and DOS are committed to ensuring that children with autism have access to qualified professionals, and we need your assistance in achieving this goal. We are happy to answer any questions you may have as you consider enhancing your programming to enable students to graduate ready to qualify for a Behavior Specialist license. Please contact Ms. Shannon Fagan, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse (OMHSAS), at shafagan@pa.gov or 717-772-7763 with any questions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Marion".

Dennis Marion
Deputy Secretary, OMHSAS
Department of Human Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marilyn J. Heine, MD".

Marilyn Heine, MD
Board Chair, State Board of Medicine
Department of State