

From: Inquiry into Abuse in Disability Services POV eSubmission Form
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Sent: Wednesday, 10 February 2016 2:20 PM
To: FCDC
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into Services for People with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Services for People with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Mrs Rebecca Spiteri
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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Services for People with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

My seven-year-old son was diagnosed with Autism at five years ago. It was incredibly overwhelming and devastating. We felt bombarded by information and opinions - not just from family, but from both public and private organisations. In a sense, this was at a time we were grieving a child we felt we had lost. This is the only way I can describe our feelings.

Of course we understand now that isn't the case. Now we embrace and celebrate our son's points of difference. We nurture his strengths and help him to develop and manage his not-so-strong points. This came through the help of some wonderful occupational therapists, speech therapists, GPs and transition workers. But it was hard to know which services to approach in the beginning.

Our greatest difficulty was not having a central agency to turn to. While we did access Amaze in the beginning, we felt this was an organisation that was under resourced and only doing the best it could. We needed a central agency to sit us down, tell us everything was going to be okay, and give us just a small amount of points to focus on. Instead we were given a large amount of overwhelming reading materials that confused us and to be honest was impractical.

Parents of newly diagnosed ASD children need a step-by-step guide of early intervention - a 'what-to-do-next' guide, so to speak.

I was unaware I was entitled to funding in the beginning. I was unaware I could use Medicare plans to assist in payment for OTs, Physios, Speech Therapists, Psychologists while waiting for early intervention funding to kick in.

The Medicare and Centrelink processes for funding are long and protracted. I was asked the same questions

by the same organisations over and over. They already had every detail, yet couldn't seem tie it all together.

Parents in these situations are grieving - for want of a better word. It is very difficult to take in so much information in the early months. A simple step-by-step guide, based on the child's diagnosis, would help parents to separate the immediate needs from the less important.

I hope my family's experiences can help to make the processes for newly diagnosed ASD families a little easier in the future.

Kind regards
Rebecca Spiteri

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File1:

File2:

File3: