

The White House Agenda on Disabilities

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We must build a world free of unnecessary barriers, stereotypes, and discrimination. Policies must be developed, attitudes must be shaped, and buildings and organizations must be designed to ensure that everyone has a chance to get the education they need and live independently as full citizens in their communities.

President Barack Obama, April 11, 2009

President Barack Obama and Vice-President Joe Biden have a comprehensive agenda to empower individuals with disabilities in order to equalize opportunities for all Americans.

In addition to reclaiming America's global leadership on this issue by becoming a signatory to -- and having the Senate ratify -- the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the plan has four parts, designed to provide lifelong support and resources to Americans with disabilities. They are as follows:

First, provide Americans with disabilities with the educational opportunities they need to succeed by funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, supporting early intervention for children with disabilities and universal screening, improving college opportunities for high school graduates with disabilities, and making college more affordable. President Obama and Vice President Biden will also authorize a comprehensive study of students with disabilities and issues relating to transition to work and higher education.

Second, end discrimination and promote equal opportunity by restoring the Americans with Disabilities Act, increasing funding for enforcement, supporting the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, ensuring affordable, accessible health care for all and improving mental health care.

Third, increase the employment rate of workers with disabilities by effectively implementing regulations that require the federal government and its contractors to employ people with disabilities, providing private-sector employers with resources to accommodate employees with

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disabilities, and encouraging those employers to use existing tax benefits to hire more workers with disabilities and supporting small businesses owned by people with disabilities.

And fourth, support independent, community-based living for Americans with disabilities by enforcing the Community Choice Act, which would allow Americans with significant disabilities the choice of living in their community rather than having to live in a nursing home or other institution, creating a voluntary, budget-neutral national insurance program to help adults who have or develop functional disabilities to remain independent and in their communities, and streamline the Social Security approval process .

Autism

President Obama and Vice President Biden are committed to supporting Americans with Autism Spectrum Disorders (“ASD”), their families, and their communities. There are a few key elements to their support, which are as follows:

First, President Obama and Vice President Biden support increased funding for autism research, treatment, screenings, public awareness, and support services. There must be research of the treatments for, and the causes of, ASD.

Second, President Obama and Vice President Biden support improving life-long services for people with ASD for treatments, interventions and services for both children and adults with ASD.

Third, President Obama and Vice President Biden support funding the Combating Autism Act and working with Congress, parents and ASD experts to determine how to further improve federal and state programs for ASD.

Fourth, President Obama and Vice President Biden support universal screening of all infants and re-screening for all two-year-olds, the age at which some conditions, including ASD, begin to appear. These screenings will be safe and secure, and available for every American that wants them. Screening is essential so that disabilities can be identified early enough for those children and families to get the supports and services they need.