

Hope for every child, every family.™

# THE AUTISM BEACON



LIGHTHOUSE AUTISM CENTER QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 2 | FALL 2014

## Lighthouse Autism Center Prepares Families for Insurance Open Enrollment in November

As a result of changes from the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the Open Enrollment period for insurance is now occurring only once per year. For coverage starting in 2015, the Open Enrollment period is November 15, 2014–February 15, 2015. Individuals may also qualify for Special Enrollment periods outside of Open Enrollment if they experience certain events. So, unless parents of a child with autism have a qualifying event, they will need to take advantage of the Open Enrollment period to make sure they can obtain autism therapy coverage for their child in 2015.



### Why parents cannot afford to wait an entire year to enroll

Lighthouse Autism Center typically sees an uptick in clients in the August and September timeframes, when kids go back to school. This increase in numbers stems from parents getting repeat calls from the school to pick up a “problematic” child. It is critical for parents with children evaluated and diagnosed with autism to take advantage of Open Enrollment so coverage for therapy can begin promptly in 2015, as needed.

Waiting until the next Open Enrollment period in November 2015 will delay needed therapy for an entire year and can have a negative impact on a child’s development. A child having to delay full-time autism therapy for one year loses out on 2,040 hours of therapy which could have been spent teaching them new skills. One year in the development of a child, depending on the child’s age, can mean the difference between being potty trained, learning to talk, and learning to play well with others. The earlier a child receives services, the better their chances of reaching his/her full potential. Some behavior analysts actually say that one year of a learned inappropriate behavior will result in six months to “unlearn” the behavior and learn a more appropriate one. If undesirable behaviors are compounded, this could essentially add a need for more therapy time than originally necessary.



To help parents navigate the insurance process and get signed up to take advantage of coverage beginning in 2015, Lighthouse Autism Center insurance expert, Sandy Maggioli, will host a seminar in December at our Park Place location, along with an insurance broker.

## Our Spots

**Mishawaka – Edison Center**  
3730 Edison Lakes Parkway  
Mishawaka, Indiana 46545

**Mishawaka – Park Place Center**  
525 Park Place Circle  
Mishawaka, Indiana 46545

**Warsaw Center**  
1535 Provident Drive  
Warsaw, Indiana 46580

 Call: (574) 387-6732

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# The Heart of the Matter



## A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As parents, we know how incredibly difficult it is to place our trust into the hands of those extending care to our loved ones – and it's especially difficult to surrender such care when it is a child, regardless of an autism diagnosis. But, truly, it does sometimes take a village!

At Lighthouse Autism Center, we are fortunate to have hired 60+ employees over the last two years (not many companies in the area can say they are hiring at that rate!). In fact, we have the most full-time Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) on staff in the region. Yet, our turnover remains at 0%! Our clinicians love what they do, and they love working with our clients. But it's not all about numbers – it's the caliber of professionals we employ that makes us most proud.

Before being specially trained by Lighthouse Autism Center for their roles, these passionate, dedicated clinicians must:

- Complete their extensive education, including a Master's degree in Behavior Analysis
- Complete 1,500 hours of supervised clinical work
- Pass the Board Certified Behavior Analysis exam

Our clinicians are also local and very involved in the community. We believe living, working, and volunteering in our communities shows passion, appreciation, and understanding for our children and their families. Each clinician is given the lowest case load possible, so they can spend more time per child and thus achieve better outcomes. They also collaborate with one another, and with other therapy providers, such as speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and respite providers. Our BCBA's have also been involved with transitioning children back to school at no cost to the school. This is a critical step in successfully moving a child from a center-based Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program to a classroom setting. In the next newsletter, look for even more detail on our BCBA's, and what a day in their life looks like. Until then, know that our children are in caring and capable hands!

Sincerely,

Gregg Maggioli  
Executive Director

# FREE Open Enrollment Insurance Seminar

Hosted by Lighthouse Autism Center

Join Sandy Maggioli, Lighthouse Autism Center Controller/Insurance Coordinator, for an evening dedicated to answering ABA therapy insurance inquiries in light of the Affordable Care Act's Open Enrollment period, running November 15 through February 15, 2015. A visiting insurance broker will also be in attendance to help parents complete insurance paperwork and to answer questions, one on one, regarding benefits for autism services.

## The enrollment seminar will also cover:

- What the Affordable Care Act means for ABA Therapy coverage
- Indiana Autism Mandate
- Private health insurance plan out-of-pocket costs
- Importance of enrolling during this Open Enrollment period
- General Q&A
- Resources

Lighthouse Autism Center also has programs in place to assist parents without ABA therapy insurance coverage or who meet a certain financial threshold. Lighthouse Autism Center will work with families to secure other insurance coverage or assist with access to scholarships and grants. We are also happy to meet with employers to discuss adding ABA therapy as a benefit.

If you have any enrollment questions prior to the seminar, or questions about alternative enrollment options, please contact Sandy Maggioli, Controller/Insurance Coordinator, via [insurance@lighthouseautismcenter.com](mailto:insurance@lighthouseautismcenter.com).

## Date:

Wednesday,  
December 3, 2014

## Time:

6:30 p.m. ET

## Location:

525 Park Place Circle  
Mishawaka, IN 46545

Refreshments will be provided and child care and facility tours will also be made available.

Please be sure to bring your current insurance cards.

To request a tour of our centers and meet our staff outside of the Insurance Seminar, please call: (574) 387-4313



More information about Lighthouse Autism Center and the therapy services they provide can be found online at [LighthouseAutismCenter.com](http://LighthouseAutismCenter.com).

# Staff Spotlight

SANDY MAGGIOLI, CONTROLLER/INSURANCE COORDINATOR



Parents of a child with autism must be an advocate for their child, seeking diagnosis, acquiring insurance coverage, and navigating their care – not as a casual observer, but as an integral part in their child’s ABA therapy.

No one knows this road better than Sandy Maggioli, Controller and Insurance Coordinator for Lighthouse Autism Center. Sandy has more than 10 years of experience handling insurance for the special needs population. Her career path began as a result of having been in the driver’s seat when navigating ABA therapy and insurance coverage for her own son.

“There are so many roadblocks and obstacles along the way,” said Sandy. “Reaching out to someone with knowledge and asking for help can make the process so much easier.”

Maggioli points to the Affordable Care Act as having evolved the landscape in terms of

available care for children with autism, and wants parents to know that coverage continues to improve.

“With more than 1,000 children accessing ABA therapy every day in the State of Indiana, we are fortunate to live in a state which provides a mandate requiring fully-funded insurance plans to cover autism and related services,” said Sandy. “Insurance continues to change at a fairly rapid pace, and several new options have been made available in 2014 which have enabled parents to access ABA therapy for the first time.”

Sandy is available to handle all parent and provider inquiries regarding funding streams for ABA therapy. She can be reached via email at [insurance@lighthouseautismcenter.com](mailto:insurance@lighthouseautismcenter.com).

# Shining Examples

Imagine how alienating it would be if you found yourself unable to communicate with family, friends, colleagues, and staff – saddening and frustrating, not only for yourself, but for those around you. Such was the case with Adam. When he first came to Lighthouse Autism Center at the age of 12, Adam had no speech abilities and no potty training. He wasn’t troublesome, but appeared sullen and unengaged (likely because he had no way of communicating!).



“Today, two years later, Adam is a totally changed child,” said Executive Director, Gregg Maggioli. “Adam now knows and uses sign language, allowing him to finally communicate. He is bright, happy, toilet trained and continuing to learn.”

Here’s a snapshot of just how far Adam has come:

**Communication** – When Adam came to Lighthouse Autism Center he had no way to tell his family or teachers what he wanted. Now Adam uses more than 293 signs regularly to tell his family and our staff what he wants.

**Independence with Life Skills** – Adam was very dependent on his parents to complete simple life skills. He wore a pullup and had no independence with dressing or using the bathroom. Adam is now fully toilet trained, tells people when he needs to use the restroom, and values his privacy!

**Social Skills** – When Adam came to Lighthouse Autism Center he did not engage with anyone but Mom and Dad. Nor did he laugh or play. Now, Adam is Mr. Social. He says hello to everyone when he walks in the door, and plays board games with peers!

## Clinical Corner

### Autism risk higher near pesticide-treated fields, study says

Environmental Health News: Published by *Environmental Health Sciences*

By Lindsey Konkel, Staff Writer

Babies whose moms lived within a mile of crops treated with widely used pesticides were more likely to develop autism, according to new research published June 23, 2014. The study, conducted by the University of California, Davis, included 970 children born in farm-rich areas of Northern California. The study suggested that mothers’ exposures during pregnancy may play a role in the development of autism spectrum disorders.

In this study, children with mothers who lived less than one mile from fields treated with organophosphate pesticides during pregnancy were about 60 percent more likely to have autism than children whose mothers did not live close to treated fields. When women in the second trimester lived near fields treated with chlorpyrifos – the most commonly applied organophosphate pesticide – their children were 3.3 times more likely to have autism.

The study also is the first to report a link between pyrethroid pesticides and autism. Application of pyrethroids just prior to conception meant an increased risk of 82 percent and, during the third trimester, the risk was 87 percent higher.

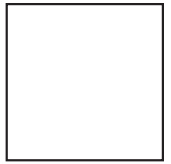
The researchers said that pesticides could impair brain development and signaling in a way that affects social interactions, learning, and behavior.



To read the full study article: <http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/2014/jun/autism-and-pesticides>.



3730 Edison Lakes Parkway  
Mishawaka, IN 46545



Learn more about us at  
[LighthouseAutismCenter.com](http://LighthouseAutismCenter.com)

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Address Line 2  
Address Line 1  
Anytown, US 12345-6789]



# Brilliant Benchmarks

**A**round Lighthouse Autism Center, the phrase “back to school” holds a very special meaning. It means that one of our own children has graduated back into the school system! We are proud to report that three of our children – Ally, Ian, and Quin – have now returned to public school!

Here’s a rundown on some of the milestones each achieved in order to make the transition:



### Ally:

- Decrease in daily tantrums and now easily redirected when upset
- Verbally communicates when something is wrong, instead of engaging in problem behaviors
- Eats new foods with a smile!
- Increase in social play and skills with peers; shows desire to make new friends



### Ian:

- Overall decrease in whining and other behaviors when he doesn’t want to do something or something is hard
- Marked increase in sentence intelligibility, using complete sentences, and speaking with better articulation
- Playing games with peers and following the rules



### Quin:

- Overall increased ability to communicate what he wants or doesn’t want without engaging in problem behaviors
- Increased ability to respond when spoken to or asked a question
- Increased ability to follow more complex directions and classroom-type routines

## Here are a few wonderful and encouraging words from Ally’s parents on her return to public school:

Dear Gregg, Sandy, Emilia, Jordan, and Leila,

When we first toured Lighthouse Autism Center 18 months ago and met with Leila and Lisa, I left in tears with so much hope and relief because we finally found a place that we knew could really help Ally. We never imagined that she would be where she is today! The change in her is surreal to us and we’re just trying to keep up with her! Thank you so much, Sandy, for helping us navigate the insurance end of things or this wouldn’t have been possible!

She is making new friends so easily and told me that at her new school she’s going to be a leader and a helper. Her IQ scores at a first-grade level are advanced to superior. In one year she went from not even recognizing her letters and numbers to reading and doing double-digit math. But I think the biggest change for us as a family is the peacefulness in our house – she is the happiest we’ve ever seen her. I can’t even begin to find the words to thank you for that.

Robert and Lisa