



## NEWS: 2011 PRESS RELEASE

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### **Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones Commends Governor Brown For Signing Bill Ensuring Autism Insurance Coverage**

Legislation Allows Children to Receive Behavioral Therapy

Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones today applauded Governor Jerry Brown for his signing of SB 946, which requires insurance companies and health care service plans to provide coverage of behavioral therapy for autism as a medical benefit. The legislation, jointly authored by Senate President pro Tempore Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) and Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Noreen Evans (D-Santa Rosa), received strong support from Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones and the California Department of Insurance (CDI).

"Behavioral therapy is widely considered to be an essential and effective method for treating children with autism, and it's a long overdue development for insurers to offer coverage for this treatment," said Commissioner Jones. "SB 946 represents a major step forward in ensuring that children with autism get the treatment they need in order to live the high-quality lives they deserve."

CDI took a leading role in concluding as a matter of law that behavioral intervention therapies such as Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) should be viewed as treatment that is mandated under California's Mental Health Parity Act (Act). Because autism is one of the parity diagnoses, the Act requires that all medically necessary treatment be covered by policies which provide for hospital, medical, or surgical benefits. Therefore, CDI is pleased that this bill reinforces that requirement and eliminates any uncertainty about the coverage requirement.

"This is an important issue that demanded our attention, and I would like to commend the Governor for signing a measure that will help thousands of children and their families in California," said Commissioner Jones. "I would also like to applaud Senators Steinberg and Evans for their leadership in authoring this life-changing legislation."

The measure takes effect on July 1, 2012, or earlier, as specified, in a manner that is consistent with existing state mental health parity law.

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