

---

## A Special Message from Governor Rick Snyder: Health and Wellness

---

September 14, 2011

*A Special Message from Governor Rick Snyder:  
Health and Wellness*

To Michiganders and the Michigan Legislature:

To build a stronger Michigan, we must build a healthier Michigan. My vision is for Michiganders to be healthy, productive individuals, living in communities that support health and wellness, with ready access to an affordable, patient-centered and community-based system of care.....

### *Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability*

Behavioral health is essential to general health....

Finally, Michigan faces significant health care challenges posed by autism. Autism is a pervasive developmental disorder that affects 1 out of every 110 children born today. Autism diagnoses are increasing rapidly with no known cause or cure. Without treatment, the average lifetime cost to Michigan of a single person suffering from autism is \$3.7 million. With early treatment, however, children can achieve much better outcomes and many of these costs can be avoided. Half of diagnosed children can reach normal functionality with appropriate assessment and treatment. Another 40% will show significant improvement. Results are best when treatment is received early.

Michigan is considered one of the 10 worst states in which to raise a child with autism. This is because evidenced-based treatment is largely excluded from insurance coverage. With such widespread exclusion of coverage, treatment options are nearly or totally non-existent throughout most of the state. To date, 27 other states have implemented changes in law to require insurers to cover evidence based therapies for autism that will save taxpayers billions of dollars. It is time for Michigan to join the majority of states in this effort to contain costs and give families access to clinically proven treatment.

### **Conclusion**

In order to see real improvement in our public health, and to make rising health care costs as manageable as possible, all levels of government, the private sector, and individual Michiganders have a part to play. Government and the private sector can and should empower Michiganders with the tools necessary to access quality health care and live a healthy lifestyle. We should act expeditiously and with compassion. At the same time, Michiganders can improve the quality of their own lives, while also reducing the economic burden of health care expenditures, by assuming personal responsibility for their own health and wellness.

Health is the foundation for Michigan's economic transformation—it allows our children to thrive and learn, it readies our graduates for meaningful careers, and it permits our current workforce to grow and adapt to a dynamic economy. In this message, we lay the groundwork for a healthier Michigan, a Michigan in which residents of all ages prosper and contribute.

