



Autism In New Jersey

On Friday, February 9, 2007, the CDC issued the most complete information on the prevalence of autism spectrum disorders in the United States to date. Across 14 states studied in 2000 and 2002, the average prevalence rate was 1 in every 152 children (6.6 in 1,000). The study showed that one in every 94 children in New Jersey has autism -- the highest rate ever documented in the United States. For boys, the rate is one in every 60.

As reported in The Record, U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., co-chairman of Congress's Coalition on Autism Research and Education, said: "You can't combat any disease until you start chronicling it. This information, disturbing as it is, is necessary. We need to know the truth."

His district includes Brick Township, site of a 1998 CDC investigation to determine whether the incidence of autism was abnormally high. The new studies show that, in fact, there was no cluster of autism in Brick Township.

President of POAC, Gary Weitzen, recalled being involved with the 1998 CDC investigation into Brick Township. "I remember asking the head of the CDC at the time if they believed that the high numbers in Brick represented a cluster of autism. I was told specifically that they believed the numbers were merely representative of the rate of autism countrywide, but more studies are needed to get conclusive data. Well, the studies are in and they prove what we in the autism community have already known- Autism is an epidemic and a national health crisis that needs to be addressed with all of our resources. The study underscores the enormous need for resources, not only for early diagnosis and treatment, but more importantly for education and training for the 14,000 New Jersey children who already have autism. We also need to provide jobs and homes for people with autism as they become adults and grow out of the educational system."

POAC is proud to be a leader in the state in teaching and reaching children already affected by this disorder. POAC not only serves the children and their families, but also the professionals who work with our children everyday. *Making a difference in the lives of children now* is at the heart of everything we do at POAC.