

TIME LINE

HEED Parents Group – 1966

Help and Education for Exceptional Dependents – the first parents’ group in Pennsylvania to represent all individuals with developmental disabilities including those with autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, specific learning disabilities and mental retardation.

Senate Bill 50 – 1966

Relieved parents of financial liability for developmentally disabled family members in institutions or other out-of-home residential care and treatment facilities or receiving treatment under various Federal and State mandates for their specific impairments. Provisions later incorporated into the first Federal Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act.

Combined Parents Legislative Action Committee – 1966 to 1979

Co-founded with other special interest parent’s groups, to educate and assist legislators in creating and passing legislation relevant to better serve the needs of all those with disabilities.

Armstrong-Kline – 1979: This US Supreme Court decision mandated extended school year education for those individuals with disabilities determined as likely to regress in learning during the summer months. The pivotal *amicus curiae* brief supporting this concept was written by Connie and Dan Torisky of the Autism Society of Pittsburgh; it became law in 1984.

Western Center Parents’ Group – 1967

Co-founded the first parents’ group at an institution in the state of Pennsylvania, and led to the founding of parents’ groups at all institutions in Pennsylvania, resulting in institutional reform as well as improvement of services and quality of life for individuals receiving residential care, treatment and habilitation at such centers — public and private.

Camp Chipeewee – 1967 to present

A product of the HEED Parents Group in Monroeville, PA, serving individuals with developmental disabilities in a summer program of recreational activities.

Nine Special Education Centers – 1968 to 1975

Co-founded special education schools for students with developmental disabilities, ages 6 through 21, including jointure boards leading to construction and staffing of these schools by the Allegheny (County) Intermediate Unit.

Monroeville Developmental Center – 1969

Co-founded a program of pre-school experience for individuals with developmental disabilities regardless of diagnosis or specific label. It later became a licensed pre-school program, called the St. Peter’s Child Development Center.

First Group Home – 1970 to 1976

Co-founded Pennsylvania’s, and the nation’s, first community group home — on Thomas Boulevard in Point Breeze, Pittsburgh, PA – and eight more group homes thereafter.

Autistic Children’s Program – 1972 to present

Co-founded with Allegheny Intermediate Unit; the state’s first specialized program of elementary and secondary education for children with autism, Pathfinder School in Bethel Park, PA.

Summer Program for the Education of Autistic Kids (S.P.E.A.K.) – 1974 to present

Summer program of education, recreation and community awareness building for individuals with autism, ages 5 through 21. This program prevents or significantly reduces summertime learning regression. S.P.E.A.K. is recognized as the region’s premier Federally-mandated extended school year program.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – 1979

Members of our chapter represented ASA on the task force that enabled the expansion of the Education of All Handicapped Act (EHA) to include all individuals with autism and related disorders of behavior and communication. Further, in 1990, we provided Diagnostic Statistical Manual Fourth Edition (DSM IV) language defining autism clearly, enabling appropriate addressing of the special needs of individuals with autism.

Autism Support Classrooms – 1980 to present

Individually, as well as in a consulting capacity, we have been responsible for the creation of autism support classrooms in Allegheny County school districts, we well as in the City of Pittsburgh – addressing school boards, as well as providing information and support for parents and other professionals in the school systems seeking to create such classrooms.

SPECTRUM Charter School – 2000 to present

Co-founded first charter school in the country to combine classroom education with vocational instruction and training for individuals with autism spectrum disorders, ages 13-21, enabling them to be graduated into community-based employment.

Police Training Film and Curriculum – 2001

At the invitation of the Pennsylvania Municipal Police Education and Training Center (MPOETC), prepared classroom curriculum and a 30-minute training tape describing characteristics of autism to enable law enforcement officers to deal appropriately with individuals with autism in custody after arrest or apprehension.

Transitioning to Adulthood – 2004

Based on PA Autism Task Force findings, prepared guidelines for overcoming governmental obstacles to effective transitioning to adulthood of those with autism.

Pennsylvania Education Code Revisions – 2004 to 2007

Created Special Education Work Group that worked with PA House Speaker and PA Department of Education to update the code with autism appropriate regulatory revisions.

Pennsylvania Autism Showcase Conference – 2006

Organized and chaired, highlighted the urgency and speeded up the implementation of key imperatives of the PA Autism Task Force, including establishment of the PA Bureau of Autism Services, and other groundbreaking initiatives.

Keystone Autism Information System (KAIS) – 2009

Established a web-based, parent-fed, statistical autism information exchange, listing, statewide, services and establishments felt by parents to be accommodating to those with autism and their families.