

## **BEACON LIGHT TO BEGIN PROVIDING TESTING FOR AUTISM**

Beacon Light Behavioral Health Systems will soon be providing additional services to individuals through its Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities division, Ramsbottom Center, Inc., to treat people with a diagnosis of autism or those who may have characteristics associated with autism. Grace Ramsbottom Autism Center for Excellence or G.R.A.C.E. program will enable individuals to receive diagnostic and assessment services, as well as treatment of autism-related disorders. Services will have a family-focused, individualized approach to care, while receiving scientifically proven treatment based on state-of-the-art assessments. Individuals who need to develop skills to effectively participate in their community, school, and home as prevention to more intense services or in conjunction with other existing community-based services, may receive treatment as well.

Young people beginning at the age of 18 months and their families will be eligible for assessment and testing services through this program.

The list of signs below are sometimes present in children with autism, but a child who may be exhibiting any or all of these signs does not necessarily mean that they have autism.

Typical signs of autism may include;

- 1) A baby that doesn't respond to his or her name when called by the caregiver.
- 2) A child who doesn't make eye contact or engage others by pointing to objects or events to share interest, and show toys to others.
- 3) An infant that does not imitate body and facial movements. A common way for a child to imitate is through common infant games such as pat-a-cake.
- 4) An infant that does not seem to be aware of the emotions of others. They do not smile when others smile at them, or if they observe another child crying, they do not cry themselves, or looked concerned.
- 5) A baby over one year that does not engage in pretend play.

“It is important to note that a child who may be exhibiting any or all of these signs does not necessarily mean that they have autism”, stated Carl Longosky, Ramsbottom Center psychologist. “Only a complete and comprehensive assessment can determine whether or not a child has this disorder.”

The assessment process used at G.R.A.C.E. takes a three-stage approach, which initially involves a medical and developmental history interview. Following the initial stage, a Functional Behavioral Analyst will observe the child in a natural setting, completing behavioral observations and administering achievement tests as needed. Lastly, if deemed appropriate, the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) will be administered. The ADOS is considered the gold standard for diagnosing autism-related disorders.

The lead clinicians performing the testing and assessment services are Carl Longosky, behavior psychologist and Dr. Danielle Poland, psychologist.

Mr. Longosky has been licensed to practice clinical psychology in the state of Pennsylvania for the past 19 years. He has been employed as the Director of Behavioral Treatment Services for Beacon Light Behavioral Health System's Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities programs since 1987.

Dr. Poland is the Director of Psychological and Counseling Services at Beacon Light. She is experienced in the provision of individual and family psychotherapy, as well as neuropsychological, personality, psychoeducational, geropsychological, and forensic evaluations in outpatient, residential, nursing home, and jail settings. Poland holds a Ph.D. from Kent State University in Clinical Psychology

Doing initial testing and assessment at Beacon Light, followed by our ability to treat people diagnosed with autism will enhance care for our community," noted Guy Signor, executive director of Ramsbottom Center, Inc. "We are fortunate to have such qualified clinicians on our staff to assist us in treating the complexities of this disorder."

"We are in an excellent position to help improve the lives of people with autism in our community, given our experience and resources." Beacon Light president, Richard Seager added "Our agency is committed to helping the community and its residents who are dealing with the affects of autism everyday. In fact, Ramsbottom Center is sponsoring a free training for professionals in the field on the assessment and treatment of autistic disorders on April 20<sup>th</sup>."

For more information regarding Autism, visit [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org) or for information regarding Beacon Light services visit its website at [www.beacon-light.org](http://www.beacon-light.org) or call 888-714-5428.

