



Marla Root Receives "2021 Milestones Professional Trailblazer Award"

Autism Advocate Works Towards Accessible Treatment and Insurance Services

COLUMBUS, OHIO, UNITED STATES, June 17, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Marla Root](#), Founder and Director of the Ohio and Illinois Autism Insurance Coalitions, is the 2021 recipient of the Milestones Professional Trailblazer Award. The award was presented at the virtual Milestones Autism Conference, held June 16-17, 2021. Root was recognized for her unrelenting focus for families and Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) providers to assist in helping to navigate insurance funded treatments for individuals on the autism spectrum.

Marla was a speaker for the virtual 2021 Milestones National Autism Conference. Her presentation, Autism Insurance Services including Telehealth in a Post-Pandemic World, focused on four key areas: identifying health insurance options such as covering ABA, speech, and occupational therapy services; identifying how telehealth may be a viable option for autism treatment delivery; advocating for access to focused ABA treatment throughout an individual's lifespan; and identifying barriers to accessing treatment. Marla's nominator had this to say about her: Through her tireless work and advocacy, I've seen individuals receive ABA through their insurance who previously never would have. These parents had tried for years without success to receive ABA, they had been connected with numerous providers, and had even changed insurance plans. Marla's extensive knowledge of the insurance system was the missing piece.

In 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued their Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network autism prevalence report. The report concluded that the prevalence of autism had risen to 1 in every 54 births in the United States – nearly twice as great as the 2004 rate of 1 in 125 – and almost 1 in 34 boys. The spotlight shining on autism as a result has opened opportunities for the nation to consider how to serve families facing a lifetime of supports for their children. In the last seven years, researchers have determined the lifetime cost of caring for a child with autism is as great as \$2.4 million. (This figure includes research, insurance cost and non-covered expenses, Medicaid waivers for autism, educational spending, housing, transportation, employment, related therapeutic services and caregiver cost.)

For over seventeen years, Marla has developed a passion for helping over a thousand families find answers to their questions and has assisted in mapping a path forward so they may advocate for the services they need. This is only the beginning, and continued funding is necessary. Root is on a mission to find supplemental gaps in the funding process and continue

to navigate through insurance waters not only in Ohio and Illinois via county and state funds but nationally.

Marla's twenty-five-year-old son Eli has severe autism and intellectual disability, which was the catalyst for her to both advocate for his services and become an administrator for a CARF-accredited mental health center. In 2016, she was an honored recipient of the Autism Speaks' Implementation Award for developing the Coalition. SAnother area very personal to Root and her family is supporting families whose loved ones are experiencing a behavioral crisis and ensuring they have access stabilization services without giving up custody to the state to access treatment services. For over seventeen years, Marla has developed a passion for helping over a thousand families find answers to their questions and has assisted in mapping a path forward so they may advocate for the services they need. This is only the beginning, and continued funding is necessary. Root is on a mission to find supplemental gaps in the funding process and continue to navigate through insurance waters not only in Ohio and Illinois via county and state funds but nationally.

The Ohio and Illinois Autism Insurance Coalitions bring together the collective strength of like-minded practitioner organizations coming together to improve the landscape of private and public reimbursable insurance services for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), including applied behavior analysis (ABA), to those served in the States of Ohio & Illinois. Working alongside our Regional Response Partners including advocacy organizations and families, the Coalition receives feedback and data from around the state. For more information about the Coalition, please visit www.asdohio.com or www.ilasd.com.

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