



Location ▲ Workforce ▲ Value

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Parkview Huntington Hospital to Create Northeast Indiana's First Autism Center

Parkview Huntington Hospital and Parkview Health System announced that the hospital will develop a comprehensive center for the treatment of autism, to open in early 2013. The Parkview Huntington Hospital Autism Center will provide therapeutic and rehabilitation services for children age 2 to 18 and support groups for their families.

"This is a very exciting step in the treatment of autism in this area," Darlene Garrett, chief operating officer for the hospital said. "There currently is no treatment center for autism north of Indianapolis. Our center will be of tremendous help to local families."

The autism center will consist of two facilities. Physical and occupational rehabilitation services will be provided at the hospital on Stults Road. Education, cognitive and behavioral therapy, and support activities will take place at a building on 2806 Theater Avenue. Renovations to create the treatment spaces will begin at both facilities in the first quarter 2013. It's anticipated both facilities will be open no later than the second quarter of 2013, depending on the finalization of the Indiana Department of Health approval process. Initially, it will provide treatment for 10 children, with an eventual capacity of 40, and will be staffed by board certified behavior analysts.

"The Parkview Huntington Hospital Autism Center will be a very comprehensive, full-time program. This type of intensive, daylong program is proven to be much more beneficial than shorter sessions," explained Mike Gerue, vice president of neurosciences for Parkview Health. "The support aspect for families is also vital because when a child is diagnosed with autism, the entire family is affected. Often, parents feel isolated and without the coping mechanisms and help they need."

Autism is the fastest growing serious developmental disability in the U.S. It is estimated that 1 in 88 children has autism, 1 in 54 boys. Boys are four times more likely than girls to have it. Autism is a spectrum disorder, meaning it has a wide variation of developmental issues. Symptoms can range from mild social awkwardness to distracting repetitive behaviors to disabling difficulties in communicating, relating to others, and understanding emotions and expressions. Since the symptoms can vary so much, treatments must be highly individualized. "That's our plan for the Parkview Huntington Hospital Autism Center," said Garrett.

When a child in northeast Indiana is diagnosed with autism, families have only a limited number of resources for help. Often, they are referred to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis. The long distance can make treatment very difficult. "Parkview saw the need to make help available to children locally, just as treatment is available here for other conditions," said Garrett.



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While the autism center will be located in Huntington, children from other counties in the region can be referred to the center too.

Duane Hougendobler, M.D., of Parkview Physicians Group in Huntington said, “As a pediatrician, I am thrilled about this advancement for local families. Children with autism are often very intelligent, but need therapeutic guidance to be able to attend school, and go on to develop careers and become contributing members of society. So, the creation of the Parkview Huntington Hospital Autism Center will facilitate the success of children with autism in the educational system and the workplace.”

The announcement about the autism center was made on Saturday, October 27, at the Parkview Huntington Community Gala, presented at the hospital by the Parkview Huntington Foundation. The foundation has pledged \$45,000 toward the start-up costs for the center and will launch a fundraising campaign to support the project.

About Parkview Huntington Hospital

Parkview Huntington Hospital is a not-for-profit, 36-bed community hospital providing comprehensive inpatient, outpatient, emergency and diagnostic healthcare services and supportive and educational programming for the people of Huntington County and surrounding communities. Parkview Huntington is a member of Parkview Health, a family of hospitals and healthcare services covering a 15-county region in northeastern Indiana and western Ohio.

For more information

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