

# Sounding the Alarm: Battling The Autism Epidemic

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# Summary of the Film

- Bob Wright, a former NBC executive, finds out that his grandson has been diagnosed with Autism.
- As Bob Wright and his wife Suzanne Wright learn the ins and outs of ASD, they come to found the organization Autism Speaks
- The documentary follows the lives of children and young adults at different stages of their journey with autism.
- Catalogs the challenges that families with autism face from insurance costs to transition into adulthood.

# Positive Social Change

- Builds awareness of the challenges faced by families with children with autism.
  - Building awareness of the differences of people with autism helps to clear up misconceptions of autism to the general public and dispel stigmas associated with the disorder.
- By shining light on the real financial challenges these families face, the documentary strives to achieve legal change in reference to insurance costs for ABA therapy and other necessities for the success of a person with autism
- Through showing examples of success stories of families and individuals on the spectrum, the documentary shows the public what these people can do and how, with proper early interventions, and nondiscriminatory employers, independent lives that people with autism can lead.

# Advocacy

- Video demonstrated public support for more money being put into research to find the causes of autism.
- Displayed support for families to receive the right to be covered by health insurance for the correct treatment needed by their child with autism.
  - Shows community protesting with signs to stop budget cuts in order to help get services.
- Argued that families should not have to move to a different location because they are unable to be covered by insurance for the treatment their child needs.

# Community

- Families with autistic children form a community.
  - Autism Speaks walks
  - Protesting budget cuts
- Autistic children form a community at school.
  - Riverview School
- World wide community to show support for those with autism.
  - Light It Up Blue

# Service

- The film showcases people across the country participating in Autism Speaks walks to raise awareness about Autism and money for research.
- Some places around the country have respite services and disability crisis services that help families who have children with disabilities living at home.
  - They check in on families, help take the children to appointments, and will take the children for a few hours or a day or two to allow the family to have a break.
- People gather to protest budget cuts of programs that support families that have Autistic children.

# Updates

Suzanne Wright died in 2016

In 2017, President Donald Trump fulfilled a promise to Suzanne Wright by lighting the White House blue on World Autism Awareness Day (April 2).

In December 2014, the ABLE act is passed, allowing families to set up special savings accounts for disability related expenses.

January 24, 2017, Ohio house bill 463 is passed, under which, mandated autism coverage is required of most private insurance providers.



# Connections

- When parents explained how they feel like failures because they are unable to help their child in the way they need.
  - The emotions shown by families stood out to me the most and made me more passionate about this issue and opened my eyes to how affected the families truly are.
- Living with Autism is a constant reality for families. The way families must shape their lives around the needs of the child and how doing simple things, like going to the grocery store, requires careful plan and execution for a family impacted by ASD.
  - The adjustments and challenges highlighted in the documentary make me want to do anything I can to lessen the burden in ways like advocating for insurance coverage of autism therapies.
- When parents expressed concern about what will happen to their child when they are gone.
  - This a fear that all parents have for their children, but it is especially heightened for these parents because group homes may not be a safe place for their children.
- When young adults become too old for programs that help teach them living skills and provide them with a community.
  - These young adults and their families may be left with very little support and no services to turn to for possibly the rest of their lives.

# Critiques

The title of the film refers to Autism as an epidemic, but since it a condition related to brain development it cannot be spread from person to person, and therefore is not an epidemic.

# Benefits

People who are unaware of the aspects of Autism Speaks, would benefit from this film due to the abundance of information that is presented about the organization.

New families that are unsure of how to start the journey with their child who has autism would benefit from this video, as they would learn various ways to help their child along the way.

# Course of Action

Changes in legislation for insurance that inhibits several families in multiple states from getting their child the treatment that they need.