

## Guest Opinion: New hope in cards for families living with autism

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The inability to find quality treatment for children with autism is the norm in Arizona - not the exception. Autism is a pervasive developmental disorder, marked by impaired social interaction and communication and a restricted range of activities and interests.

My journey with autism began in earnest recently when I spent time with an Arizona mother of a young daughter with autism.

Initially, the mother had been hopeful - she had read all of the peer-reviewed studies that some children respond to a particular type of intensive intervention, Applied Behavioral Analysis, especially if commenced at a young age.

She traveled to every autism organization in town looking for help, only to be put on waiting lists. She soon learned that the local autism organizations that offer ABA provide therapists with only a few hours of training, no curriculum and minimal supervision.

These well-intended individuals are being sent into families' homes - into situations for which they are unprepared. And all the while, the parents, having read all of the research, hold out for miracles. Last year, the Legislature recognized the need to increase the number of quality, trained therapists who specialize in treating autism in Arizona.

Among other things, the Legislature established a small pilot program - and if its level of success in other states is replicated, I can say to the families facing the challenges of autism, there is reason to hope. That hope has a name: the Center for Autism Related Disorders.

Dr. Doreen Granpeesheh, founder and executive director of the Center for Autism Related Disorders, has dedicated more than 25 years to the study and treatment of autism spectrum disorders, beginning her career at UCLA where she earned her Ph.D. researching effective autism treatments.

CARD has offices around the world and is opening an office in Arizona - to implement the pilot program. What separates CARD from other organizations, other than by the extensive training, is its comprehensive approach utilizing ABA, recognizing that multiple approaches within the principles of ABA are required. With its record for success and its reputation for being the best in the world, CARD has a lot to live up to. When it does - I can finally say to the families living with autism - you don't have to face it alone anymore.

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