

Brendan Wendt

02/15/13

Testimony for the Subcommittee for Health and Hospitals

Hello, my name is Brendan Wendt. I was diagnosed at the age of 4 with a high-functioning autism spectrum disorder. I have been participating in Inclusion Teaming now for a little over two years now. For me, the most important aspect of Inclusion Teaming is that it operates on the premise that everyone needs to learn from each other. This approach has the obvious advantage of allowing people like me to communicate in the way we're most comfortable with, which besides making us more relaxed also gives non-autistic participants better insight into our thought processes. In turn, they become more open around us, and we are then able to more candidly discuss the problems we face when communicating with each other. Through Inclusion Teaming I have developed an increased ability to both express myself to neurotypical people and understand their responses, which has made me much more confident in my interactions with other people.

Availing more youth to a program such as Inclusion Teaming will help raise awareness and understanding of the many ways people communicate, which will lead to better solutions on how to work through the differences which arise. This is one of the most important and effective ways to combat bullying, which I remember facing when I was in school and which I know most people with an autism spectrum disorder have to deal with. It is also an excellent way to prepare students for situations in the workplace; everyone will be better able to recognize and handle problems arising from communication differences and difficulties, which raises both productivity and morale. These should be top priorities for our schools, which makes it essential to make a program like Inclusion Teaming accessible to as many people as possible.