



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Chad L. Aldis, Executive Director

Phone: (614) 223-1555

Email: caldis@schoio.org

Web: www.schoio.org

Ohio's Autism Scholarship: Providing a Choice for Parents and Students

COLUMBUS, Ohio (April 12, 2011) – April is Autism Awareness Month, and Ohio's Autism Scholarship Program has become a vital tool for families with a child who has been diagnosed with the disorder. The program allows parents who are not satisfied in their child's traditional educational setting to gain access to private educational options.

"The Autism Scholarship Program provides great resources for families of students with autism," said School Choice Ohio Executive Director Chad Aldis. "It is a life saver for parents struggling with the challenges of their autistic children in Ohio's educational system."

"The Autism Scholarship improved my life by helping me to communicate more, express my emotions, have better confidence in myself, and be a more active person in my job and community," said Kevin Carr, an Autism Scholarship recipient.

Currently, more than 1,600 students participate in the scholarship program, and there is no limit to the number of students who can apply.

The Autism Scholarship Program was created in 2003 to provide parents an opportunity to enroll their child with Autism in private education programs that provide specialized instruction from certified teachers and focus on the child's social and academic needs. Scholarships are worth up to \$20,000 per student per year.

The Autism Scholarship is often used by parents to gain access to early intervention services and can be used for individualized programs that may include several components, such as speech therapy, social skill development, and behavioral therapy.

Autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that involves impairments in

-more-



**Autism Scholarship Program
Page 2 of 2**

communication, social and behavioral domains, and these symptoms can range from very mild to severe. It is a lifelong disease that crosses all racial, ethnic, and social lines.

While the Autism Scholarship Program is a great resource for students living with the disorder, no such program currently exists to give children with other disabilities in the state the same educational choices. A program is being debated now in the Ohio General Assembly that would provide improved educational opportunities for children with special needs. Contact School Choice Ohio at 614-223-1555 to find out what this proposed legislation could mean for children with disabilities in our communities.

For more information about the Autism Scholarship Program and a list of participating private providers, visit www.schoio.org.

###

Note to the Editor: Please contact School Choice Ohio Communications Coordinator Kaleigh Frazier at 614-223-1555 for contact information for families who are available to discuss their participation in the Autism Scholarship Program.

About School Choice Ohio

School Choice Ohio (SCO) is committed to the goal of every child in Ohio having access to a quality education. Because this is not yet a reality, the organization works tirelessly to educate both the public and our leaders on the importance of empowering parents to find the best educational setting for the needs of their children. SCO believes that all parents should have the opportunity to choose which school is best for their children, regardless of their income level.