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**Secretary of State Jesse White to Launch Statewide Program to Increase Library Services for Individuals with Autism**

Illinois Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White and The Autism Program of Illinois (TAP) are launching "Targeting Autism," an innovative program designed to create collective solutions to address the support needs of Illinois residents impacted by autism. This program will encourage libraries to work together with TAP, which is the largest statewide autism resource and service network in the nation.

"Empowering libraries to better serve those with autism requires this type of collaborative effort," said White. "Individuals with autism are often misunderstood and challenged to find welcoming, supportive environments to alleviate social isolation and help them achieve their full potential. I look forward to working with the autism community to expand available services at our libraries."

The "Targeting Autism" program will host two forums this year in Springfield on March 4 and 5 and September 3 and 4. The forums will bring together national and regional autism experts and advocates to establish a strong network of libraries and community to improve the quality of life for all residents touched by autism.

"Secretary White has partnered with TAP in the past and we look forward to this opportunity to work together to provide services to help those who have or are caring for someone with autism," said Russell Bonanno, TAP Program Manager. "We are honored to be able to play a role in this exciting and important initiative."

"Targeting Autism" is supported by a grant from The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). To find more information about the "Targeting Autism" program, visit the State Library's website at <http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/libraries/targeting-autism.html>.

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