Understanding Family Economic Impact of Chronic Child Health Conditions

**WHAT WILL WE DO?**
In this study, CHR will assess the economic impact of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) on families. Families bringing up a child with ASD face major costs, including out-of-pocket expenses for medical visits, speech therapy visits, and other services. These families also face substantial time costs, as parents or guardians of a child with ASD often spend many hours managing the child’s condition and coordinating health and school services.

Dr. Lynch’s study will recruit 1,500 families of children ranging in age from 3 to 17 from Kaiser Permanente Northwest, KP Northern California, KP Hawaii, and the OCHIN network of safety net clinics. The study will compare costs among three types of families—500 families caring for a child with ASD, 500 families caring for a child with asthma (a different chronic condition that may also be costly for families), and 500 families caring for a child with no significant health problems. The study will follow these families for one year and survey them at three-month intervals, so parents and guardians can report costs as accurately as possible.

**WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL THIS STUDY MAKE?**
Previous reports of family costs for children with conditions such as cancer suggest that costs are substantially greater when a child has a significant health condition. So far, most studies on the cost of ASD have examined only short-term health care costs. What Dr. Lynch and her team learn from these 1500 diverse families will create a much fuller, more accurate picture of the actual costs of caring for a child with ASD. These findings can inform workplace and government policies that recognize the full impact of autism and better support families.