

Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver Update

The Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver is a program Massachusetts developed to provide intensive in-home services (such as ABA and DIR/Floor Time) for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other services that will support children who are from low-income families in their homes and communities.

Eligibility Requirements

The program is limited to children between the ages of 0-8 who are Medicaid eligible and at risk of institutionalization now or at some point in the future. Each child is eligible for up to \$25,000 worth of services per year. Under the Waiver, the federal government will reimburse Massachusetts 50% for the cost of intensive in-home services

History of the Waiver

Massachusetts developed the waiver program because a state law was passed in October 2005, as a result of advocacy efforts of MAC's Autism Special Education Legal Support Center and other autism and parent groups throughout the Commonwealth. The Waiver has received broad support, with lead sponsors Rep. Barbara L'Italien, Sen. Robert Antonioni, as well as Senate President Therese Murray and other critical legislative leaders. This law required the Commonwealth to apply to the federal government for a Home and Community Based-services Medicaid Waiver ("Waiver") to provide services for children with autism. MAC's Autism Center convened a broad-based group of parents, providers, advocates and other professionals for two years to develop recommendations regarding eligibility, range of services and provider qualifications for the Waiver. The Center submitted the Statewide Recommendations to DMR's Division of Autism in January 2006

The Commonwealth's Executive Office of Health and Human Services belatedly submitted an application for the Waiver to the federal government in December 2006. On September 20, 2007, the Department of Mental Retardation announced federal approval of the Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver.

Status

The initial enrollment period for applications opened on November 5, 2007 and closed on November 16, 2007. During the eleven day enrollment period, the Department of Mental Retardation received more than 1,100 applications for the Waiver from families all over the Commonwealth.

To ensure that children throughout the Commonwealth could obtain a waiver slot, a geographic lottery was conducted by the Division of Autism and 80 applications were selected. Families who were chosen were notified of their selection in writing. Children whose applications were selected are currently going through a process to determine financial and clinical eligibility. Some children will be found ineligible and as a result other children who applied during the initial enrollment period in November will be chosen by lottery for the Waiver.

Once the eligibility requirements are met, the state autism support centers will assist families in developing a program and locating providers to meet their individual child's needs. The Division of Autism has reported that some children have recently begun to receive services under the Waiver.

Given the large number of applications received, MAC's Autism Center is seeking an increase in the budget appropriation for next year in order to expand the program to cover 200 children.

For more information regarding the Children's Autism Medicaid Wavier, visit the Department of Mental Retardation website at:

http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eohhs2terminal&L=7&L0=Home&L1=Consumer&L2=Disability+Services&L3=Services+by+Type+of+Disability&L4=Mental+Retardation&L5=Mental+Retardation+Support&L6=Autism+Spectrum+Services&sid=Eeohhs2&b=terminalcontent&f=dmr_c_autism_waiver&csid=Eeohhs2