

## Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver and the Division of Autism Line Item #5920-3010

**Budget Request: Level Funding \$5.5 million for Autism Waiver (7.4 million total)**

### Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver and the Division of Autism #5920-3010 FY 22 Budget Request: \$5.5 million for Autism Waiver (\$7.4 million total line item)

	Funding History:	
FY21 Final Budget	\$5.5 million for Autism Waiver	\$7,429,571 total line item
FY22 H1	no Autism waiver earmark	\$5,933,900 total line item
FY22 HWM		\$7,433,900 total line item

- **The Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver has provided critically important services to children with autism and their families during the pandemic.** Governor Baker's emergency order recognized that ABA service providers are essential workers. Through the Waiver, almost 300 children with autism were able to receive the in-person and remote services and supports essential to their safety, well-being, and development.
- Autism Waiver services will be essential in FY22. With COVID-19, DDS swiftly pivoted to provide essential supports to families to address food security, income instability, regression, and continuity of care with expanded Waiver services. Many children with autism have been deprived of special education services vital to their development, unable to access remote learning.
- As with other MassHealth services, Autism Waiver usage declined during the pandemic due to health and safety restrictions. However, level funding is essential in FY22 to support children and families as the full range of in-person services become available again. With level funding, 300 children with autism from low-income families will receive services necessary to remain in their homes and communities during the pandemic and recovery, including services necessary to meet the complex needs of the many young children with autism involved with DCF. In addition, children through age 10 will be able to receive Waiver services, avoiding abrupt disruption of services during the pandemic.
- The Commonwealth will receive **federal reimbursement through Medicaid for approximately 50% of the cost** of these critical Waiver services.
- During the fall 2020 annual Open Enrollment Period for the Waiver, DDS received more than 600 applications for services from families who have children with autism. The program is near capacity, and there are only openings when children age out of the program, resulting in a lengthy wait list.
- The prevalence of autism is now as high as 1 per every 59 children, according to the Centers for Disease Control. The Commonwealth's Autism Commission, established by the legislature, has recognized the critical importance of the Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver to meet the needs of young children with autism.
- Research demonstrates that children with autism who receive intensive in-home services can make *substantial progress and in some instances, acquire skills within typically developing ranges* in areas of social skills, language acquisition, nonverbal communication, and reductions in challenging behaviors.
- Studies show that the provision of intensive services (such as Applied Behavioral Analysis), at early ages can result in **estimated cost savings ranging from \$187,000 to \$203,000 per child ages 3-22 years**, and a total lifetime savings range of 1 to 2 million dollars.

*Massachusetts Advocates for Children 4/21*