

Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver and the Division of Autism

Line Item #5920-3010

Budget Request: Increase of \$750,000

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FY 21 Budget Request: \$6.25 million for Autism Waiver \$8.2 million total line item

Funding history

FY20 Final budget	\$5.5 million for Autism Waiver	\$7.4 million total line item
FY21 H2	no Autism Waiver earmark	\$7.4 million total line time

- With an **increase of \$750,000** the Autism Waiver will be able to:
 - help meet the complex needs of the many young children with autism involved with DCF
 - avoid eliminating 40 children from the Autism Waiver program due to new state rates
 - increase the number of children receiving Autism Waiver services

The Commonwealth will receive federal reimbursement through Medicaid for approximately 50% of the cost of these critical Waiver services.

- During the fall 2019 annual Open Enrollment Period for the Waiver, DDS received more than 700 applications for services from families who have children with autism. The program is at full 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 Center for Disease Control.
- The Commonwealth's Autism Commission, established by the legislature, has repeatedly recognized the critical importance of the Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver to meet the needs of young children with autism. In its initial 2013 report and again in February of 2017, the Commission recommended increasing Waiver capacity.
- Research demonstrates that children with autism who receive intensive in-home services can make *substantial progress and in some instances acquired skills within typically developing ranges* in areas of social skills, language acquisition, nonverbal communication, and reductions in challenging behaviors.
- Cost-benefit analysis has shown that if children with autism receive intensive services at a young age, the savings are significant. Recent studies have found 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 2/25/20