

The Home and Community Based Waiver for Children with Autism will provide a team based approach to early intervention for young children - Birth-6 identified as having autism AND who are eligible for long-term care under Medicaid. The team consists of a lead therapist - who is responsible for developing and monitoring the program and other professional support that the child might need. Not all kids will need all services (this is a broad spectrum!) The parents will be a part of the team.

SB- 177 can be read in it's entirety by going to: www.leg.state.co.us - click on Bills under the Senate section and then go to #177.

Here is a listing of the services that will be provided:

SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SUBPART 7, HOME- AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SHALL INCLUDE ONLY THE FOLLOWING SERVICES, AS SPECIFIED IN THE ELIGIBLE CHILD'S CARE PLAN:

- (a) OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY;
 - (b) SPEECH THERAPY;
 - (c) PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES;
 - (d) PHYSICAL THERAPY; AND
 - (e) BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (this is intended to cover the costs of the Para-professional person who would be paid a lesser rate, but would be responsible for more hours of direct intervention based on recommendations from the team)
- (2) NO ELIGIBLE CHILD MAY RECEIVE SERVICES IN AN AMOUNT IN EXCESS OF TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS ANNUALLY.

This is who is eligible:

"ELIGIBLE CHILD" MEANS A CHILD WHO:

- (a) IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE STATE'S MEDICAID PROGRAM PURSUANT TO SECTION 26-4-201, 26-4-301, OR 26-4-303; (long-term care - not all kids on the spectrum will qualify)
- (b) IS AGE BIRTH TO SIX YEARS;
- (c) HAS A DIAGNOSIS OF AUTISM;
- (d) IS AT RISK OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN EITHER AN INTERMEDIATE CARE FACILITY FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED, A HOSPITAL, OR A NURSING FACILITY; AND
- (e) IS NOT RECEIVING SERVICES FROM ANY OF THE ALTERNATIVES TO LONG-TERM CARE WAIVER PROGRAMS ESTABLISHED IN THIS TITLE. (If you are on another waiver - Children's Extensive Support or Home and Community Based Services - Katy Beckett - you will have to choose. However with the long waiting lists for these programs -we figure most young kids aren't on these waivers)

We intended to develop a set of services that were not specific to any particular intervention model, but could be provided with most models i.e. Lovass, The Denver Model, Floor-time etc. etc. etc. Families should be able to choose a model that best fits in with their life and their values.

How soon will the Waiver be Available?

Our experience with Medicaid Waivers is that sometimes the process moves forward very quickly and sometimes it gets hung up in the bureaucracy (state and/or federal). All advocacy organizations and service providers that are known to us at the time will be notified of progress. Watch the newsletters, websites, and list serves of these organizations for more information.

What Can Families Do Now to Get Ready?

It can't hurt to get Medicaid eligibility for the child – no one will force anyone to be on the Autism Waiver. Families will be able to choose whether they want to access the Autism Waiver, continue to access Medicaid through TANF or SSI, or remain on one of the other children's Medicaid Waivers such as CES or HCBS. If people are getting what they need through other means they may not need to access the Autism Waiver and a child who really needs the help can get on. However, the child must be deemed eligible for Medicaid AND Long-Term-Care, so if the child is eligible for another Waiver and on a waiting list, and meets the eligibility criteria listed above, they should be eligible for the Autism Waiver.

Families should continue to strongly advocate for appropriate supports and services for their child with autism through all available means. The Autism Waiver will only be able to fund about 70 children per year. Demographics currently tell us that about 700 children a year are diagnosed with autism in Colorado each year. This waiver will not serve all the children who need help, so it is important for families to think strategically and continue to work for support through: private insurance, the local school district, Early Childhood Connections, Family Support and other community and private resources.

It is very important that families be able to describe the needs of their child in an honest yet comprehensive manner. Think about all the things that someone else would have to do to keep your child healthy and safe if you weren't around. Develop that inventory in writing. Add and subtract information to it monthly. A journal of your day can be a very compelling record.

How Will Children be Selected for the Waiver?

First of all they must be eligible as listed above. Secondly, given the still limited resources, there will in all likelihood be some form of waiting list. Whether or not "most in need" criteria will be developed is not known at this time.