

Montana DDP Autism Information

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services approved Montana's new autism home and community-based services waiver for children (Children's Autism Waiver) to become effective January 1, 2009. The new waiver will initially serve about 40- 45 children diagnosed with autism who are at least 15 months through age four when enrolled into the waiver. Enrollment will be limited to a maximum three-year period at an average cost of \$40,000 per year per child. Services include 20-25 hours per week of intensive in-home habilitation training by a children's autism trainer, respite, waiver-funded children's case management, adaptive equipment/environmental modification, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, transportation, individual goods and services, and program design and monitoring for children. To view the waiver application go to <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/dsd/mt0667rwaiver/>.

In the fall of 2007, in order to identify gaps or needs in the developmental disabilities (DD) service system for individuals with autism, the Developmental Disabilities Program (DDP) formed an Autism Workgroup. The workgroup has recommended that DDP develop and implement a new Medicaid Waiver to provide opportunities for Montana children with autism to receive intensive early intervention treatment and for their primary caregivers to receive training and support that will help them address the long term needs of their children and families. The workgroup also recommended adding new services for adults with autism to the existing DDP 0208 waiver.

Representation on the workgroup includes DDP management, DD service providers who serve children and/or adults with autism, Montana Developmental Center staff, behavioral therapists, parents, a State Legislator, fiscal analysts, Office of Public Instruction (OPI), Children's Mental Health (CMH), Child Care, DDP Evaluation and Diagnosis clinics, Family Support Specialists, Quality Improvement Specialist, Waiver Specialist and other DDP staff. As of July 2008, the workgroup has met 9 times over the course of 10 months to discuss details that would be included in the waiver proposal and will continue to meet on a monthly basis until the work is completed and implemented. The group identified the most immediate needs as earlier assessments, intensive early intervention services for children with autism, crisis intervention, and effective behavioral intervention for adults with autism. The decision was made to develop and submit a Medicaid Waiver for children with autism that would include earlier diagnosis and intensive early intervention and to develop or identify effective services for adults that could be included in the existing DDP Waiver.

The Montana Autism Waiver for Children would serve children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder who are up to 8 years of age. The intensive behavioral intervention services will be

delivered typically 30-40 hours per week for a 3 year period. Treatment strategy will be developed and directed by a DDP-certified behavior specialist, documented in an individualized family support plan, and provided by a direct support person with training and experience in providing behavioral support to children with autism. The waiver will also include respite services to be used as crisis intervention for families as well as case management to provide service coordination.

Intervention services will be conducted primarily in the home with parents and other family members taking an active part in all components of the therapy. The goal is to make parents professionals in the treatment of their children. Parents will be required to provide training for their child at least 10 - 15 hours per week so that at the end of the 3 year program, parents will have the expertise to continue and sustain the child's gains.

Autism data:

- 1 in 150 children are born with autism (2002 data)
- 1.5 million Americans are affected by autism
- 10-17 % increase in incidents of autism each year
- \$3.2 million per capita cost of autism over the person's lifetime without effective intervention
- 47% of children are mainstreamed as a result of intensive ABA programs
- \$1.7 million to \$2.8 million per person estimated cost benefit (avoidance) from intervention

What are autism spectrum disorders?

Autism is one in a group of disorders known as autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). An ASD begins before the age of 3 and lasts throughout a person's life. ASDs are developmental disabilities that cause substantial impairments in social interaction and communication and the presence of unusual behaviors and interests. The thinking and learning abilities of people with ASDs can vary—from gifted to severely challenged. There is usually nothing about how a person with an ASD looks that sets them apart from other people, but they may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most people.

What are some of the signs of ASDs?

People with ASDs may have problems with social, emotional, and communication skills. They might repeat certain behaviors and might not want change in their daily activities. Many people with ASDs also have different ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things. ASDs begin during early childhood and last throughout a person's life.

Red Flags of Autism Spectrum Disorders:

If your baby shows two or more of these signs, please seek an immediate evaluation.

Impairment in Social Interaction:

- Lack of appropriate eye gaze
- Lack of warm, joyful expressions
- Lack of sharing interest or enjoyment
- Lack of response to name

Impairment in Communication:

- Lack of showing gestures
- Lack of coordination of nonverbal communication
- Unusual prosody (little variation in pitch, odd intonation, irregular rhythm, unusual voice quality)

Repetitive Behaviors & Restricted Interests:

- Repetitive movements with objects
- Repetitive movements or posturing of body, arms, hands, or fingers

* Note: Contact your child's doctor or nurse if your child experiences a dramatic loss of skills at any age.

What can I do if I think my child has an ASD?

If you or your doctor think there could be a problem, contact the nearest DDP [Regional Office](#) to find out more information about testing and services.

Additional information:

[January 2009 Press Release - March 31 Deadline for Autism Screenings](#)

[June 2008 Press Release - DPHHS to Address Growing Autism Numbers](#)

[July 2008 Press Release - DPHHS to Screen Children Under Five for Autism](#)