

Key facts about autism and the Autism Waiver

WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism is a neurological disorder that becomes evident during infancy or early childhood. Autism is characterized by impaired social interaction, impaired communication skills, limited interests and repetitive behavior. National studies indicate that 1 in every 150 U.S. children have an autism spectrum disorder.

WHAT IS THE AUTISM WAIVER?

The Kansas Autism Waiver provides children who have been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder with access to early intervention services not already covered by their health care plan.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE AUTISM WAIVER?

The Autism Waiver covers children from the age of diagnosis through age 5. After the age of 5, children access services through the school system and other waiver programs. Right now, the Kansas Autism Waiver is limited to 45 children. Another 200 children remain on a waiting list.

WHAT DOES THE WAIVER COVER?

The Autism Waiver covers clinical services, therapeutic services, intensive individual support, respite for families, parent support and parent training. Services not related to autism, such as preventive care, medical check-ups and immunizations, continue to be covered by the family's health care plan.

A Kansas success story

As we learn more about science and brain development, new opportunities arise that allow us to be innovative and effective in managing our state's future. The Kansas Legislature took the latest research into account when it created the Autism Waiver. The Waiver provides Kansas children with the early intervention services they need to keep some of the obstacles associated with autism from becoming more challenging and costly concerns for Kansas families, our schools and our state.

THE WAIVER IS WORKING IN KANSAS

Today, the Autism Waiver is a Kansas success story. The children being served by the Waiver are able to access quality intervention services in a timely manner. And, when it comes to autism, timeliness is critical. Scientists tell us that children diagnosed with autism have the best outcomes if they are diagnosed early and begin receiving services right away. Early intervention results in increased functional skills, improved communication skills, and fewer behavior problems.

EARLY INTERVENTION MEANS REDUCED COSTS FOR KANSAS SCHOOLS

When children with autism have access to early intervention, they benefit from better outcomes in school. With more children receiving early intervention, we stand to reduce the special education costs being absorbed by our school system. In fact, research shows that 50% of children with autism will not require special education services if they receive intervention before they enter Kindergarten.

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EARLY INTERVENTION IS BOTH EFFECTIVE AND COST-EFFECTIVE

We can build upon the success of the Autism Waiver and take steps toward reducing our state's special education costs by allowing more Kansas children to access services through the Waiver. Expanding the Autism Waiver is both effective and cost-effective. The Waiver covers comprehensive services that are proven to be effective in treating autism. And, it's a cost-effective approach to addressing the needs of the autism community because of the federal resources available.

WITH FEDERAL RESOURCES ON THE TABLE WE CAN DO MORE

Federal resources typically cover 60% of the costs associated with the Kansas Autism Waiver. With provisions in the stimulus package, the federal match will increase to at least 66%, making now the most cost-effective time to expand the Autism Waiver. In 2010, Kansas can reduce the waiting list for the Autism Waiver by combining enhanced federal dollars with \$937,000 SGF. This would allow another 100 Kansas children to receive essential early intervention services.



Founded in 1979, Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to shaping policy that improves the lives of Kansas children and their families.