



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services



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**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES
TO THE
APPROPRIATIONS AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEES**

September 12, 2013

Good afternoon, Senators Harp and Slossberg, Representatives Walker and Abercrombie and members of the Appropriations and Human Services Committees. I am Terrence W. Macy, Ph.D., Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and I am joined today by Jennifer Bogin, DDS's Director of Autism Services. I am here before you today to seek your support for the proposed Early Childhood Autism Waiver.

Connecticut is seeking approval for a 1915(c) Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver designed to serve young children, three and four years old, who are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and who have significant deficits in adaptive behaviors as well as severe maladaptive (problem) behaviors. Using teaching techniques based on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), services are designed to improve skills in receptive and expressive communication, social interaction and activities of daily living. Services will also target the reduction of inappropriate or problematic behaviors associated with autism.

Children in Connecticut with ASD are eligible to receive autism specific in-home programming through the Birth to Three Program. At three years of age, the children transfer to their local school district to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and continue services. Preschool special education programs do not typically involve home-based behavioral services. The goal of this proposed waiver is twofold. First, to provide a bridge from Birth to Three to special education programming thereby lessening the negative impact that this transition can have on families and young children. Second, this waiver seeks to provide the home-based behavioral services to Medicaid-eligible young children that are available through private insurance. As of January 1, 2010, private insurance companies were required to cover ABA services for children with ASD under the age of 15. Medicaid does not provide that same coverage.

Eligibility Criteria (all components must be met):

- Children ages 3 and 4 years old

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- Medicaid eligible
- A diagnosis of ASD as defined in the most recent edition of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders. The diagnosis must be made by a qualified professional.
- Significant impairment in adaptive behavior as evaluated by a qualified professional. Significant impairment is defined as an inability to perform developmentally appropriate tasks in the area of self-care (i.e. feeding, dressing, toileting or safety within the home).
- Severe maladaptive behaviors (i.e. physical aggression, self-injurious behavior, bolting, wandering etc.)

Services:

- Intensive Behavioral Services: In-home, one-to-one behavior support using Applied Behavior Analysis methodology. Direct services will be delivered eight and a half hours per week.
- Clinical Supervision: Supervision of one-to-one behavioral support provider. Direct services will be delivered one and a half hours per week.

Transition Planning:

- Participants in the proposed waiver will require transition planning to Kindergarten prior to their fifth birthday at which point waiver services will be discontinued. Transition planning will officially start when the child is four years and nine months of age.
- Formal transition planning will consist of a home visit and team meeting with the DDS Autism Eligibility and Resource Specialists who will assess the level of assistance the family will need in the transition process.
- Activities to support the transition may include attending a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting, making referrals to relevant state agencies, or identifying other resources for assistance.

The planned start date for this waiver is January 1, 2014. The enrollment capacity is 30 children and costs are capped at \$30,000 per year per participant.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.