

1915(c) Medicaid Waivers: Autism Lifespan Waiver

Autism Lifespan Waiver Quick Facts

Number Served

106

Additionally, the waiver is expected to expand by 10 slots per year over the next 5 years

Target Population

People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), ages 3 and over, with an IQ of at least 70

Waitlist

1,550 people, or over 10 years

Individual Cost Cap

\$50,000 annually

Annual Cost per Participant

\$23,219

Source: DSS, August 2019, except cost cap information is from CMS

What are 1915(c) Medicaid waivers?

1915(c) waivers allow states to establish Medicaid-funded programs to provide home- and community-based services to eligible individuals who would, without the benefit of such services, otherwise be institutionalized (e.g., placed in a nursing home or other facility). A waiver allows the state to waive certain federal Medicaid requirements in order to (1) provide services not typically provided under Medicaid and (2) limit waiver enrollment. Separate waivers are generally required for each eligible population and states typically operate multiple waivers. Connecticut has ten 1915(c) waivers.

What fiscal controls apply to waiver spending?

Federal law requires states to provide assurances that their waivers are “cost neutral,” meaning the average per capita expenditures for covered services will not exceed those for institutionalized care ([42 U.S.C. 1396n\(c\)\(2\)\(D\)](#)). Waivers also have individual cost caps established by the state and approved by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that limit the total cost of a person’s care plan to some percentage of what it would cost to care for that person in an institution or a dollar amount.

What are care plans?

Federal law requires that 1915(c) waiver programs ensure that participants receive services in accordance with an individualized and person-centered plan of care ([42 C.F.R. § 441.301](#)). Those served by the waiver may receive different services depending on needs and preferences described in their plans.

What is the Autism Lifespan Waiver?

The Autism Lifespan Waiver is a 1915(c) Medicaid waiver administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS) that provides services to people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

What is the history of this waiver?

Legislation passed in 2006 required the Department of Developmental Services (DDS, then known as DMR) to establish a pilot program to provide supports and services to adults with autism ([PA 06-188, § 37](#)). The pilot included a feasibility study on obtaining a Medicaid waiver to serve this population. In 2007, legislation creating the Division of ASD Services within DDS authorized state agencies to seek such a waiver ([PA 07-4, June Special Session, §§ 109-114](#)). CMS approved Connecticut's autism waiver in 2012. A 2016 law moved the Division of ASD Services from DDS to DSS and made DSS, rather than DDS, the lead agency for coordinating state agency functions that have responsibility for ASD services ([PA 16-3, §§ 47-60 & 63](#)). DSS amended and renewed the waiver in 2017 to reflect this change and lower the individual cost cap from \$60,000 to \$50,000, among other things.

Available Services

Services available under this waiver include the following:

- **Assistive Technology**
- **Clinical Behavioral Support Services**
- **Emergency Response System**
- **Interpreter**
- **Job Coaching**
- **Life Skills Coach**
- **Live-in Companion**
- **Respite**
- **Social Skills Group**
- **Specialized Driving Assessment**
- **Transportation**

Is this the only waiver serving people with ASD?

Beginning in 2014, the state also administered an Early Childhood Autism Waiver serving children ages 3 and 4. In 2016, DSS closed the waiver to new patients, noting that an expansion of ASD services under the Medicaid State Plan would provide services to Medicaid-eligible children transitioning off the waiver.

What is the Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council?

By law, [the Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council](#) advises DSS on (1) policies and programs for people with ASD, (2) services provided by DSS's Division of ASD Services, and (3) implementation of recommendations from the previously conducted autism feasibility study ([CGS § 17a-215d](#)). Membership is shown below.

Represented Agencies (Heads or Designees)	Appointed Members
Department of Aging and Disability Services	People with ASD (2)
Department of Children and Families	Parents or guardians of a child with ASD (2)
DDS	Parents or guardians of an adult with ASD (2)
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services	Advocates for people with ASD (2)
Department of Public Health	Professionals working in the ASD field (2)
DSS	Service providers for people with ASD (2)
State Department of Education	Higher education institution representatives (2)
Office of Early Childhood	Disability Rights Connecticut, Inc. executive director
Office of Policy and Management	Physician who treats or diagnoses ASD

**Learn
More**

"Programs for Individuals with Autism," OLR Report [2018-R-0148](#)

CMS, [Connecticut Waiver Factsheet](#)

DSS, [CT Home and Community Supports for Persons with Autism](#), 2017

Kaiser Family Foundation, [1915\(c\) Waiver Participants by Type of Waiver](#), 2017

