

Autism Division of the Department of Developmental Services: NOTICE

Information on How to Qualify as an Autism Provider for the Children's Autism Waiver Program

Opportunity for Providers of Autism Specialty Services:

The Children's Autism Waiver Program (AWP) of the Department of Developmental Services' (DDS) Autism Division is currently looking to expand the list of available Providers to work with children and families, statewide, within the program. Providers can be independent professionals or employees of an agency. These providers are not required to have existing contracts with the Autism Division or with Department of Developmental Services. In this Waiver Program, providers will go through a specific qualification process that is outlined below. For information about provider qualifications and to access the provider application, please visit the Autism Division of Department of Developmental Services website at <https://www.mass.gov/dds-childrens-autism-waiver-service-program-overview> and search for provider information or contact one of the seven DDS Children's Autism Support Centers <https://www.mass.gov/doc/childrens-autism-support-centers-2025/download>.

What is the Children's Autism Home and Community-Based Services Waiver Program?

The Autism Waiver Program is designed to provide one-to-one behavioral, social, and communication-based interventions through a service called Expanded Habilitation, Education. The waiver also provides related support services such as community integration activities and respite. The waiver serves children under the age of 10, with an autism spectrum disorder, who are eligible for MassHealth Standard, who meet all the eligibility criteria for the Autism Waiver Program. The Autism Waiver Program is designed to provide services to help children with autism remain in their homes and actively participate with their families and in their community. This program receives partial funding from the federal government.

The major service on the Waiver Program is **Expanded Habilitation, Education**. This service is designed to help support children who demonstrate significant deficits in the areas of behavioral, social, and communication skills because of their autism, by assisting them in acquiring, improving, and retaining the self-help, socialization, and adaptive skills necessary to reside successfully in their family home and community setting. It consists of one-to-one interventions developed and monitored by trained clinicians that are carried out in the child's home and community. With the assistance of the Program, each family will hire a specialized clinician who creates an individually designed Positive Behavior Support Plan to support their child's assessed needs, utilizing therapies such as Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), Floor Time and Relationship Development Intervention. Direct support staff will be hired to provide the one-to-one intensive therapy designated in the Plan. Families in the Program also have an opportunity to choose other waiver services such as community integration activities, family training, respite, etc. which are designed to help their children develop in areas related to behavior, social skills, and communication.

The Autism Waiver Program uses a service delivery model called Participant Direction in which the parent takes the lead in designing the program and selecting service providers based on the child's assessed level of need. All providers of waiver services are paid through the designated Fiscal Management Service (FMS). Each family receives support from an Autism Support Broker at one of the seven Department of Developmental Services funded Autism Support Centers, and from a Targeted Case Manager (Autism Clinical Manager) from the DDS Autism Division.

What is the Process to Become a Qualified Provider of Services for this Autism Waiver?

The process differs slightly for agency personnel and individual providers. The qualifications for the highest levels of clinical service providers require stringent educational and professional requirements and providers of all services will need to submit documentation that demonstrates their experience working with children on the autism spectrum.

Agency Providers

Agency personnel must complete the Agency application form, attest that the agency personnel working with the family meet the qualifications for that service (including but not limited to having a valid CORI and NBC Fingerprint clearance on file) and submit the application by mail or email to the Autism Division.

1. Only one application is necessary, even if the agency is interested in providing services statewide.
2. Agencies can qualify for all or some of the waiver services. Agency applicants must attest that the staff meets the qualifications for the services they wish to provide and submit a sample of supporting documents for each service.
3. All agency providers of waiver services must ensure and attest that the agency personnel have current, valid, CORI and National Background fingerprint clearances.
4. By signing the application, agencies are confirming that the agency personnel meet the relevant waiver qualifications.
5. Once the application is received by the Autism Division, the application will be reviewed and any necessary follow-up contact for clarification will be made by staff of the Autism Division.
6. The approved materials will then be sent to the FMS. The FMS will then send a provider agreement to the agency. Once the agreement is completed the agency will be added to the provider list.
7. If an agency is chosen by the family for service provision, a contract is signed between the family and the agency that includes

relevant frequency, duration and rate information for the service(s) to be purchased.

Individual Providers

An Individual provider must complete the Individual Application, attest that he/she meets the qualifications for that service, submit the application by mail or email to the local Autism Support Center and successfully complete a CORI and NBC Fingerprint process.

1. Only one application is necessary, even if the individual is interested in providing services statewide.
2. Individuals can qualify for all or some of the waiver services. Applicants must attest that they meet the qualifications for the service(s) they wish to provide and submit supporting documents for each service.
3. All individual providers of waiver services must agree to have a CORI conducted by the FMS and a National Background Fingerprint check.
4. By signing the application, an individual is confirming that he/she meets the relevant waiver qualifications.
5. Once the application is received by the Autism Division, the application and all relevant materials (resume, educational credentials, licensure, SSN number, references, etc.) will be reviewed and any necessary follow-up contact for clarification will be made by staff of the Autism Waiver Program.
6. The approved materials will then be sent to the FMS. The FMS will then conduct the CORI and arrange for fingerprinting.
7. If the CORI and NBC Fingerprinting are satisfactory, then the FMS will send a provider agreement to the individual. Once the agreement is completed the individual will be added to the provider list.
8. If chosen by the family for service provision, a contract is signed between the family and the individual that includes relevant frequency, duration and rate information for the service.

Important Information:

- The Fiscal Management Service maintains a web portal listing of all qualified agency and individual providers.
- The process of qualifying providers is on-going; there is no deadline for applications.
- The FMS is responsible for the payment of all approved waiver services.
- Rates for services may not exceed the capped rate that has been set by the Department, nor can they be supplemented by another source. Providers must agree to these rates.
- Families are free to select any qualified provider and negotiate a lower rate which the provider is free to accept.
- Providers must meet the training requirements established by Department of Developmental Services and the family.

All providers of waiver services must meet the qualifications set forth in the Autism Waiver Program as approved by the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid. All providers of waiver services will be paid through the designated Fiscal Management Service (FMS). Becoming a qualified provider of Autism Services for this Autism Waiver does not guarantee new clients for the provider as families choose who they wish to hire for the services from the list of providers.

For additional information about the Autism Waiver Program or provider qualifications, call the Autism Support Center in your area. For a listing of the Department of Developmental Services-funded Children's Autism Support Centers click [here](#):

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/childrens-autism-support-centers-2025/download> or access the Department of Developmental Services web-site at <https://www.mass.gov/dds-childrens-autism-waiver-service-program-overview>.

To Apply: Download and complete the appropriate Autism Waiver Program application (agency, independent contractor, homemaker - independent, or homemaker-agency) from the Mass.gov DDS website. <https://www.mass.gov/dds-childrens-autism-waiver-service-program-overview> and follow the instructions on how to submit the application.