



CABINET FOR HEALTH
AND FAMILY SERVICES

Serving the Needs of Kentuckians with Autism Spectrum Disorder

June 17, 2026

Key Message

The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services recognizes the importance of ensuring children with autism have access to medically necessary services and supports. There are multiple pathways through which children with autism may qualify for Medicaid coverage, and eligibility and coverage rules vary depending on the pathway used.



Office of Autism

- Established April 2016 by [KRS 194A.623](#)
- Housed in the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities
- Executive Director is Tal Curry
 - Serves on state councils and workgroups
 - Responds to constituent calls & emails
 - Staffs the Kentucky Advisory Council on Autism
- [KYACA Biennial Report](#) to Governor, Legislative Research Commission, & Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities



Kentucky Advisory Council on Autism Statutory Representatives

- Dept. for Public Health
- Dept. for Medicaid Services
- Dept. for Community Based Services
- Dept. of Public Advocacy
- Dept. of Education
- Dept. for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities
- Dept. of Juvenile Justice
- Office for Children with Special Health Care Needs
- Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Kentucky Autism Training Center/ University of Louisville
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- University of Louisville (Co-Chair)
- University of Kentucky Human Development Institute
- University of Kentucky (Co-Chair)
- Education Professional Standards Board
- Pediatrician
- Weisskopf Child Evaluation Center/Univ. of Louisville
- First Steps Program (KEIS)
- ARC of Kentucky
- Director of Office of Autism
- Consumer representative (4 total)
- Citizen-at-large (5 total)
- At least 6 self-advocates & 6 parent representatives



Kentucky Advisory Council on Autism Subcommittees

Early Childhood Subcommittee (birth to age 5) identifies strengths and challenges in ensuring Kentucky's system of care is moving toward system level coordination in the early screening, assessment, diagnosis, and intervention of autism.

School Age Subcommittee (ages 5-21) considers issues relevant to the lives of students and their families focusing on student bullying, suicide prevention efforts, and high-quality transitional services and programming.

Adolescent & Adult Subcommittee (age 18/21+) develops recommendations to reduce restraint and seclusion in facilities, centering autistic voices and the use of non-pathologizing language, and supporting development of [online learning courses for employees or autism](#).



Kentucky Advisory Council on Autism Webpage

www.kyaca.org

Find Resources by Age Group

September 12, 2019 by trex



Infants & Toddlers 0 – 3



Children 3 – 14



Teenagers 14 – 21



Adults 21+

Resources for Adults

Assessment/Diagnosis

- [Community Mental Health Centers](#)
- [Eastern Kentucky University Psychology Clinic](#)
- [Key Assets Kentucky Behavioral Health](#)
- [Medical Diagnosis vs Educational Eligibility](#)

Advocacy and Support

Interventions

Education

Transition

Health and Insurance

Licensed Providers



Autism Resource Sheet



Learn More About Autism

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disability that is believed to occur in about 2-3% of our population. Observable differences such as those in communication, social behavior, and need for security reflect differences in the brain. Every autistic person experiences autism differently. Learn more by visiting these links.

Resources

- What is Autism
- About Autism
- Autism 101
- The Meaning of Self Advocacy
- Books About Autism
- Autism & Co-Occurring Disabilities

Connect With Other Families

If you have a family member with autism, a great way to learn more about supporting them is from others with experience doing it. Connecting with families who have an autistic family member provides sense of community, belonging and understanding. In person or online, you can create a place where you can discuss similar needs, help each other by sharing information and resources envision all the possibilities for your child. This support and friendship helps navigate your journey and is necessary for maintaining good health.

Resources

- Start Here Guide
- Family Support Group List
- KY Special Parent Involvement Network
- Family to Family
- 13 Necessary Next Steps for Parents

Medicaid Eligibility Pathways

Traditional Medicaid Eligibility

- The most common pathway is through traditional Medicaid eligibility.
- Eligibility is based on the income and circumstances of the child's family or household.
- Children who qualify receive the full Kentucky Medicaid benefit package.
- Adults and children with Autism Spectrum Disorder can access a comprehensive service array through Medicaid without a waiver, based on medical necessity, formal diagnosis, and person-centered treatment planning.
 - Diagnostic evaluations
 - Physician services
 - Behavioral health services
 - Applied behavioral analysis
 - Occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy
 - School-based services
 - Other medically necessary services

Medicaid Eligibility Pathways

Traditional Medicaid Eligibility: EPSDT Benefit

- Children enrolled in Medicaid receive the federal Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit.
- EPSDT requires Medicaid to cover medically necessary services for eligible children, even if those services are not typically covered for adults.
- EPSDT can also support medically necessary treatment provided by qualified out-of-state providers or facilities when appropriate. EPSDT does not cover room and board or personal support needs provided through Home and Community-Based waivers.

Medicaid Eligibility Pathways

Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waivers

- Some children with autism qualify for Medicaid through a Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver.
- Unlike traditional Medicaid, waiver eligibility is generally based on the child's income and resources rather than the family's income.
- To qualify, children must also meet waiver-specific criteria, **including a required level of care, such as an institutional or long-term care level of care.**
- Children enrolled through a waiver receive:
 - The full Medicaid benefit package, including EPSDT
 - Additional waiver services designed to help them remain in their homes and communities

Kentucky's 1915(c) HCBS Waiver Programs

Acquired Brain
Injury (ABI)

Acquired Brain
Injury Long
Term Care
(ABI LTC)

Home and
Community
Based (HCB)

Michelle P. Waiver
(MPW)

Model II
Waiver (MIIW)

Supports for
Community Living
(SCL)

Community Health
for Improved Lives
and Development
(CHILD)

Important Distinction Regarding Out-of-State Services

- EPSDT covers medically necessary Medicaid services. It does not cover room and board, personal needs or educational services.
- When a child leaves Kentucky to reside in an out-of-state facility, the child is generally no longer eligible to receive Kentucky waiver services.
- Because waiver eligibility is tied to Kentucky's waiver program, the child may no longer qualify for waiver-based Medicaid eligibility while residing out of state.
- In those circumstances, the child may need to qualify for Medicaid through another eligibility category, such as traditional Medicaid.
- If the child does not qualify for Medicaid through another eligibility pathway, payment responsibility may fall to the family or private insurance coverage, if available.

DMS Resources

1915(c) Home and Community Based Waivers
Website



Connect with DMS on social media

Facebook: [KyMedicaidServices](#)

Instagram: [@Kentuckymedicaid](#)

X: [@KentuckyDMS](#)

LinkedIn: [Kentucky Department for Medicaid Services](#)

Foster Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

323 Foster Youth with an ASD diagnosis

- This is 3.7% of the foster care population.

Placements of Youth with ASD:

- 15 Youth in Out of State Facilities
- 40% of Foster Youth with ASD Placed in Foster Homes (128 Youth)

Barriers to In-State Care for Foster Youth with ASD

Complex Service Needs

- Many youth require intensive behavioral supports, specialized therapies, educational accommodations, and coordinated medical care.
- Co-occurring mental health, intellectual/developmental disabilities, or challenging behaviors increase placement complexity.
- Accessing specialized services without a formal ASD diagnosis can be very difficult.

Geographic Service Gaps

- Specialized services and providers are concentrated in limited areas of the state.
- Rural communities often have fewer treatment and placement resources.

Impact on Children and the System

- Delays in identifying appropriate placements.
- Increased use of higher levels of care.
- Longer lengths of stay in congregate care settings.
- Placement farther from family, community, and school connections.
- Greater reliance on out-of-state providers when in-state resources cannot meet the child's needs.

Key Assets Kentucky

Specialized Community-Based Care Provider

Key Assets Kentucky partners with DCBS and Medicaid to serve foster youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), intellectual and developmental disabilities, and other complex cognitive and behavioral health needs.

Closing Message

Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Service remains committed to ensuring children with autism have access to medically necessary care through multiple eligibility pathways. While eligibility and coverage rules differ between traditional Medicaid and waiver programs, both pathways provide access to comprehensive Medicaid benefits, including EPSDT protections for children.

Questions?

