



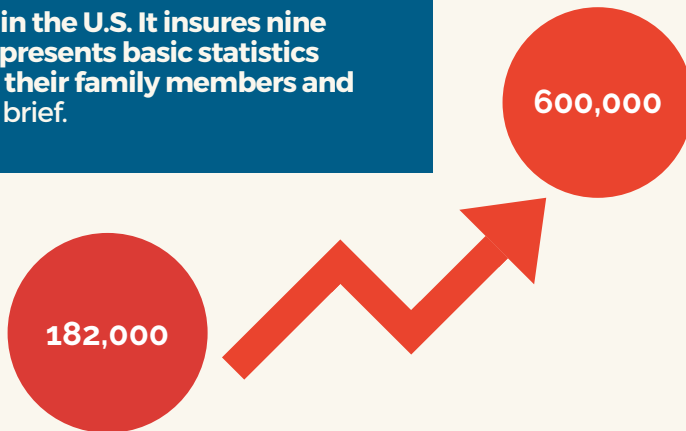
National Autism Indicators Report Introduction to Medicaid and Autism

March 2023



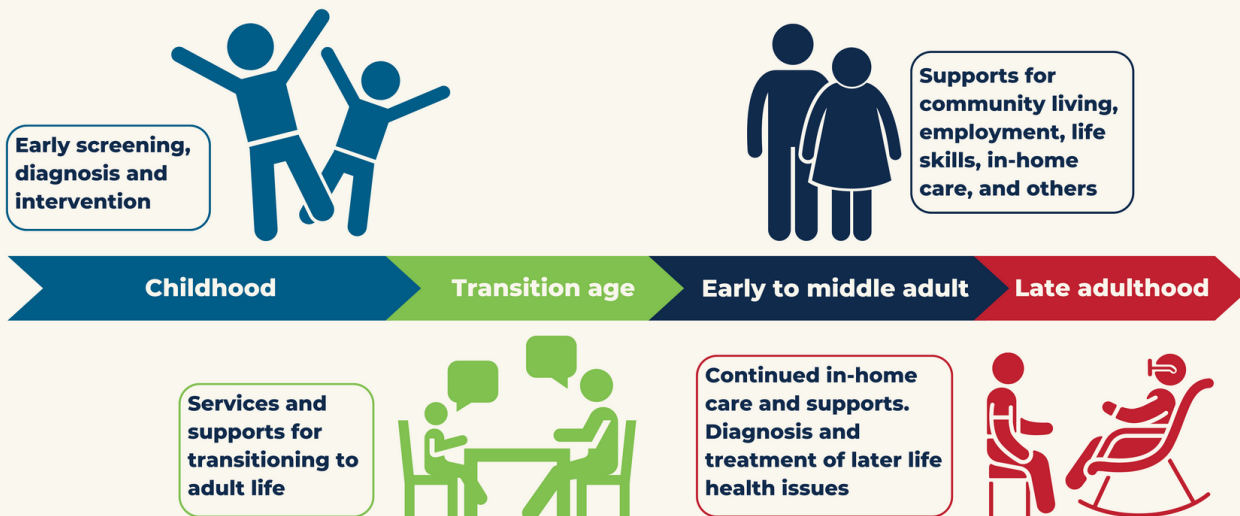
Medicaid is the largest source of public health insurance in the U.S. It insures nine million people with disabilities of all ages. This overview presents basic statistics about the critical role of Medicaid for autistic people and their family members and outlines key policy issues. Read the [full report](#) and policy brief.

The number of autistic people enrolled in Medicaid more than tripled between 2008 and 2016. Nearly 70% of these enrollees were children.



Autistic people must meet eligibility criteria in their state to receive Medicaid benefits. Most autistic people qualify for Medicaid based on disability, versus poverty or other reasons.

Enrollment declines sharply at 18 years of age, when youth must requalify for Medicaid as an adult. One in four autistic youth lose their Medicaid coverage as they enter adulthood, and only half regain it.





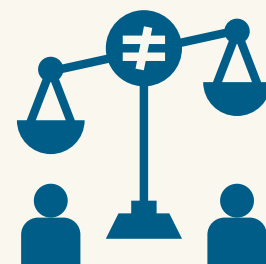
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At-a
Glance

Most Medicaid-funded services for autistic children and adults were outpatient services for physical health. The home and community-based service most common among autistic adults enrolled in a Medicaid waiver was case management (27%). Only 4% received supported employment services, and only 5% received caregiver supports.

Disparities exist in service access and utilization among autistic Medicaid enrollees. For example, autistic children and adults of color enrolled in Medicaid are less likely to receive services like occupational therapy than their white peers.



Medicaid waivers are special arrangements that allow a state to deliver home and community-based services (HCBS) to support a disabled person to function in their community. Autistic people are usually served under Medicaid waivers that are designed for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Only seven states had autism waivers as of 2022.

10 Key Policy Issues

- **Navigating Medicaid eligibility** is complex and confusing.
- Access to services is affected by a **lack of providers who accept Medicaid**.
- Medicaid waivers provide coverage for essential services, but **few states have autism-specific waivers**.
- People with multiple service needs report **remaining on waitlists for Medicaid waiver services for many years**.
- **We lack Medicaid providers** who are competent in serving autistic people.
- **Disparities in access to Medicaid** and service utilization
- Developmental disability services, largely funded by Medicaid waivers, are **biased toward facility-based care versus community-based services**.
- **Little is known about how autistic adults use long-term services and supports**, especially as they age.
- There is a **lack of supports for unpaid family caregivers**.
- State policies that tie Medicaid eligibility to **work requirements are problematic for autistic adults**.