

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

Ten agencies said no: when the system isn’t built for severe autism

A mother counted the refusals. Ten agencies, each saying they lacked qualified staff for her son’s behavioral needs. Nobody was lying. That is what makes it a policy problem, not a customer service problem.

PILLARS: WHY · WHO | COMPANION TO BLOG POST B160 | 2-PAGE BRIEF

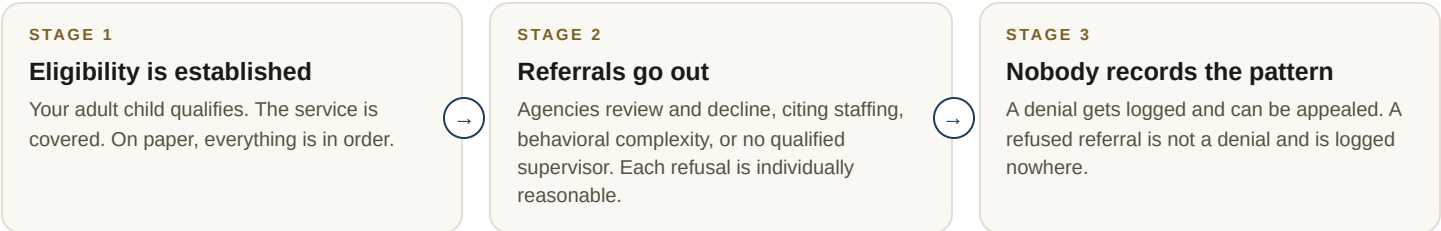
10

AGENCIES SAID NO

Each citing a lack of qualified staff for one young man’s needs.

How a family ends up with nothing

ELIGIBLE, REFUSED, INVISIBLE



What a refusal is, and what it is not

THE GAP IN THE PROCESS

A denial against a refusal

The system has a robust process for being told no and no process at all for being told nothing. Your task is to convert the right column into the left one.

ELEMENT	A DENIAL	A REFUSED REFERRAL
Written notice	Yes, an Adverse Benefit Determination	None
Appeal right	60 days to file	None
Hearing	ALJ review available	Nothing to review
State data	Recorded and counted	Invisible
Your status	Denied, and can contest it	Eligible, authorized, unserved
The move	Appeal it	Document it until it becomes a determination

21

Where Michigan’s flagship stops

The Great Lakes Center for Autism Treatment and Research serves from diagnosis to age 21. It does not serve adults.

3

Things a provider needs to say yes

A qualified supervisor, trained direct staff, and a rate that covers both.

\$17.13

Michigan’s wage floor

As of January 1, 2026. The rate assumes a person who needs less support than your adult child needs.

TEN AGENCIES, ONE YOUNG MAN

“

Alicia Mesa wrote that ten different ABA agencies refused to provide her son Pablito services, each saying they did not have qualified staff to support his behavioral needs. She described his transition plan as a mockery, because no program would take him and no day programs existed that could support his profound needs. He was 22.

”

ALICIA MESA, NATIONAL COUNCIL ON SEVERE AUTISM, 2023

THE TAKEAWAY

One refusal is a scheduling problem. Ten refusals, dated, numbered, each with a written reason, is a documented service desert, and it is the most powerful document a family in this situation can hold.

TURN THE PAGE

How to convert refusals into an appealable record, what goes in the log, and who to send it to.

Turning ten refusals into one record

NUMBER THEM, THEN ESCALATE

LOG

What to record every time

- ☐ Provider name, date, and person you spoke with
- ☐ The exact reason given, in their words
- ☐ Whether they are on the PIHP network list
- ☐ Whether they serve adults at all
- ☐ What they said they would need to say yes

CONFIRM

Get it in writing

- ☐ Email after every call, same day
- ☐ "Confirming your agency declined this referral on this date"
- ☐ State the reason they gave you
- ☐ "Please correct me if I have that wrong"
- ☐ Most will confirm. That reply is your evidence

ESCALATE

Where the numbered log goes

- ☐ Your supports coordinator, in writing
- ☐ The PIHP regional office, copied
- ☐ Request a provider who will accept the referral
- ☐ Or request a written Adverse Benefit Determination
- ☐ Say those exact words. It puts them to a choice

OUTSIDE

Records beyond your own file

- ☐ Recipient Rights complaint on undelivered hours
- ☐ Disability Rights Michigan, 800-288-5923
- ☐ Autism Alliance of Michigan navigator service
- ☐ Your state legislator, with the dated log attached
- ☐ Do not say hard to serve. Say the rate does not staff it

BRING ONE PAGE, NOT A BINDER

The refusal log

01

Numbered

One through ten, in the order they happened.

02

Dated

The day of the call and the day of the written reply.

03

Reason

Their words, not your summary of them.

04

Ask

A provider who will accept, or a written determination.

YOUR MOVE

When every provider says no

1

Number the refusals

One, two, three. Date and reason.

2

Confirm in writing

Email each one, keep the reply.

3

Send the log

Coordinator and PIHP regional office.

4

Demand a choice

A provider, or a written determination.

5

Go outside

Rights office, DRM, then a legislator.

Most families stop counting around four, because counting hurts and feels like nothing. It is not nothing. It is the only record that this happened at all.

SOURCES

Mesa A. When Profound Autism Falls Off the Cliff into the Abyss. National Council on Severe Autism, 2023. Republished by The Lucas Project.

Residential Opportunities Inc. Great Lakes Center for Autism Treatment and Research, Portage and Galesburg, Michigan. Serves from diagnosis to age 21.

Direct Care Worker Wage Coalition. Michigan mandated direct care worker wage, \$17.13 per hour effective January 1, 2026.

Autism Alliance of Michigan. Provider directory and MiNavigator service.

Disability Rights Michigan. Service denial and Recipient Rights advocacy. 800-288-5923.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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