

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

When an autistic adult is forced to stay home all day

"No day program available" is written on a denial letter like a scheduling inconvenience. Lived at home, it is a full day, every day, with nowhere to go and nothing built around it. Three specific risks follow that gap, and none of them are the family's fault, whatever the paperwork implies.

BY JIM PALASTY · 13 MIN READ · THE COST OF "NO PLACEMENT AVAILABLE"

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RISKS THAT FOLLOW THE GAP

Physical safety, mental health, and skill regression each rise measurably when a day has nowhere built into it.

How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

Build the interim kit

A grab-and-go structure kit fills today's gap while the placement fight continues.



STEP 2

Track what's actually happening

Safety incidents, mood, and skill changes, logged weekly, become the evidence the denial letter never had to reckon with.



STEP 3

Request supports with the record

A documented harm file turns "no placement available" into a request an agency has to actually answer.

The structure kit, built today

Visual schedule	Even a simple picture strip beats an undifferentiated day.
Sensory tools	Two go-to regulation items, ready without searching.
One standing task	A real, recognized daily contribution, however small.
Three short outings	Low-cost, low-barrier, repeatable without a program.
Harm log	Weekly safety, mood, and skill notes, dated from today.

A STORY WE KNOW

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When Julian's day program lost its funding, his father was told, in one paragraph, that no comparable placement existed in the county. Julian spent the next four months mostly on the couch. Two elopement attempts, a return of self-injurious behavior that had been absent for two years, and a father who quietly stopped working full shifts followed within that window. His father built a structure kit in week five, too late to prevent the first two incidents but not too late to stop a third. He also started logging everything, which became the file that got Julian a temporary in-home habilitation authorization six months later, something the county had claimed for months didn't exist.

THE COUCH WASN'T A PLACEMENT. IT WAS THE ABSENCE OF ONE, QUIETLY COSTING SOMETHING EVERY SINGLE DAY.

What matters, at a glance

Risk 1: physical safety

Unsupervised, unstructured hours correlate with more elopement attempts and more self-injury for many high-support adults.

Risk 2: mental health

Isolation and loss of routine drive measurable increases in depression and anxiety symptoms, in both the person and the caregiver.

Risk 3: skill regression

Skills practiced daily in a program and never practiced at home tend to fade first, often invisibly, until a reassessment reveals the loss.

The structure kit

Visual schedule, sensory tools, one standing task, and a short list of low-cost outings. Not a program replacement. A bridge.

Harm log cadence

Ten minutes a week tracking safety, mood, and skills turns a quiet crisis into a documented, arguable case.

This isn't the family's failure

A waiting list, a closed program, or an unfunded waiver line created this gap. The paperwork rarely says so plainly. Say it yourself.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

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|---|--|
| ☐ A five-item structure kit, assembled and in use | ☐ A weekly harm log tracking safety, mood, and skills |
| ☐ A written request for interim in-home hours | ☐ The original denial or "no placement" letter, saved |
| ☐ Your CMH board's meeting schedule as a backup escalation point | |

YOUR MOVE

When "no placement available" is the whole answer you've been given, here is what you build instead

- 1 Build the five-item structure kit this week.
- 2 Start a weekly harm log: safety, mood, skills.
- 3 Request in-home habilitation hours as an interim measure, in writing.
- 4 Ask your case manager directly what alternatives exist beyond the closed program.
- 5 Bring the harm log to your next plan review as documented evidence.
- 6 Escalate to your CMH board if no interim measure is offered within 30 days.

"No placement available" is not the end of the request. It's the start of documenting exactly what the absence costs.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

healthlaw.org · <https://healthlaw.org/>

lifecoursetools.com · <https://www.lifecoursetools.com/>

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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