

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

# The age-21 cliff when the Medicaid Autism Benefit ends

Michigan's Medicaid Autism Benefit does not send a warning letter before it ends. It simply stops on a birthday, and what replaces it depends entirely on whether your family started the paperwork months earlier.

BY JIM PALASTY · 12 MIN READ · A CLIFF YOU CAN SEE COMING FROM A YEAR OUT

12

MONTHS BEFORE THE CLIFF

The Autism Benefit doesn't announce its own ending. The countdown starts whether you're watching it or not.

## How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

### The Autism Benefit has a hard stop

Michigan's Medicaid Autism Benefit ends at 21, on the birthday, with no automatic replacement plan.



STEP 2

### Nothing transfers automatically

Adult waiver services require their own separate application and eligibility process, started well in advance.



STEP 3

### You start the countdown at 12 months out

Not the week of the birthday. The processing time alone can eat that entire window.

## 12-month timing checklist

|               |                                                       |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 12 months out | Request adult waiver eligibility screening in writing |
| 9 months out  | Schedule the ICF/IID level of care assessment         |
| 6 months out  | Submit the HSW application if not already enrolled    |
| 3 months out  | Confirm adult CLS provider continuity in writing      |
| At 21         | Confirm services transferred without a gap in writing |

THE SIX-WEEK GAP



Simone started her son's adult waiver paperwork three months before his 21st birthday, believing that was plenty of time. The eligibility screening, level of care assessment, and plan of service each took longer than expected, stacking into a six-week gap with no ABA and no adult CLS in place. She now tells every family she meets to start the clock a full year out, not three months.

THREE MONTHS FELT LIKE ENOUGH TIME. THE PAPERWORK DISAGREED.

## What matters, at a glance

### MICHIGAN SPECIFIC

#### What ends at 21

The Medicaid Autism Benefit, including ABA and related autism-specific services funded under the children's benefit, ends at the 21st birthday.

#### What might replace it

Adult HSW services, including Community Living Supports, can pick up some of the same functional support, but only if the application is already in process.

#### The benefit that just stops

No ceremony, no warning letter, no automatic transfer. It ends on a specific date whether or not anyone in the family knew it was coming.

#### What to apply for early

Adult waiver eligibility screening, ICF/IID level of care assessment, and a plan of service, all started well before the birthday.

#### Behavior gains and routines

Document what's currently working so a new adult service plan can be built to continue it, not restart from zero.

#### CLS as a bridge

Community Living Supports can carry forward some of what ABA and children's services provided, framed correctly in the new plan.

#### BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

- |                                                                                        |                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A written request for adult waiver eligibility screening      | <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of current behavior supports and routines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A completed HSW application, if not already enrolled          | <input type="checkbox"/> Written confirmation of provider continuity             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A calendar reminder set exactly 12 months before the birthday |                                                                                  |

#### YOUR MOVE

### When the age-21 cliff is approaching, here is the timing that actually works

- 1 At 12 months, request adult waiver eligibility screening.
- 2 At 9 months, schedule the level of care assessment.
- 3 At 6 months, submit the HSW application if needed.
- 4 At 3 months, confirm adult provider continuity in writing.
- 5 At 21, confirm the transition happened without a gap.
- 6 Document any regression during the transition immediately.

*The cliff is real. The twelve months before it are the only part of this you actually control.*

#### RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

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

autismspeaks.org · <https://www.autismspeaks.org>

Informational only. Not legal or medical advice. Verify current program rules before acting.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JP

#### Jim Palasty

Jim Palasty is the founder of OASIS for Autism and a single father of an adult autistic daughter in Michigan.