

Therapy Services What's Best and How to Avoid Denials

Many of our children's therapy services were disrupted over the past year. Perhaps virtual school made therapy impossible, or you paused on taking your child into a clinic for therapy.

Now might be a good time to return to those in-person therapy visits. But first, think about the goals for your child's therapy services:

- Which skills should school focus on?
- What are your priorities for community therapy?
- What kind of therapy will have the biggest impact?

Therapy at School

If your child qualifies for special education, he or she likely will receive therapy services during the school day. Most often these include physical therapy (PT), occupational therapy (OT) and speech-language pathology (SLP) services. Your child's **IEP team**, including you as a central team member, will decide:

- Which therapy services your child will receive.
- The setting, like the classroom or playground.
- The number of sessions per week.
- The length of each session.

You may be asked to sign an authorization for the school to bill Medicaid for therapy services. Signing this form does **not** mean you are financially responsible or that your child can't also receive Medicaid coverage for community-based therapy. It only means that your school can get reimbursed for the therapy services it provides.

Community-Based Therapy

Children can receive therapy services at home, at a clinic, a hospital or in other community settings. These services likely start with a visit to your primary care provider who will talk with you about your concerns, and areas that a therapy can improve.

To find therapist, talk with your clinic, contact your [Regional Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs](#), or visit the [Well Badger Resource Center](#). Your child's school and other families will have good suggestions about finding community-based therapists in your area.



Tip for Families

To help avoid insurance denials make sure that your child's school-based and community-based therapies have **different goals**. Medicaid may deny payment for community-based therapy if it's a **duplication of services**, meaning the goals of school and community-based therapies are not distinctly different. To learn more, read our [Therapy Services](#) Fact Sheet.

A Therapy Plan

Any therapy services that your child receives, either at school or in the community, should be guided by a well thought out and coordinated therapy plan. As your child's best advocate, your input is necessary as school staff and other providers decide which therapies are best to help gain new skills. Your understanding of your child's needs will direct therapy goals.

(Continued p. 2)

Covering the Cost and Avoiding Denials

While school is responsible for covering the cost of school-based therapy, **you** are responsible for making sure your insurance plan, HMO or your child's ForwardHealth card will pay for community-based therapy services.

Depending on your plan, you may also need a prescription from your child's doctor. Additionally, your child's therapist will need to submit a prior authorization (PA) request. The PA lets your insurance plan or Medicaid know that the service being called for, including community-based therapy, is **medically necessary** for your child.

Recently DHS simplified the [Medicaid PA process](#). "This simplification is intended to increase children's access to therapy services in the community and to reduce the documentation that providers are required to submit to ForwardHealth."



What is Medical Necessity?

For Medicaid to approve coverage for therapy services, the provider must show that it is medically necessary. DHS states, "Medicaid may deny payment if a service fails to meet Medicaid medical necessity requirements as defined under [HFS 101.03\(96m\), Wis. Admin. Code.](#)"

To learn more, see Family Voices fact sheet [Insurance Prior Authorization](#).

DHS's full Definition of [Medical Necessity](#).

What About Children's Long-Term Supports?

If your child is enrolled in one of the children's long-term support programs, CLTS and CCOP, their plan may be able to cover the cost of therapies not covered by their ForwardHealth card. Aquatic therapy and hippotherapy are example of therapies that might be covered. You'll need to work with your service coordinator to develop outcomes that show these therapies are needed to meet your child's goals. See our [Creating Outcomes](#) Fact Sheet to learn more.



Tip for Families

Find a **new balance**. Before COVID, if you spent endless hours driving your child to therapy sessions, think of this time with fewer appointments as a gift. Remember that it's also important for your child to just **be a kid**. Spending time outside with siblings or neighborhood friends is also necessary for your child's development.

What if Medicaid Denies My Child's Community-based Therapy?

Your child's community therapist submitted the prior authorization request to Wisconsin Medicaid.... But after submitting the PA repeatedly, it was denied.

Now What?

There is a better option before you give up or pay out-of-pocket. Families can, and should, appeal the Medicaid denial and **request a fair hearing**. You don't need an attorney and all hearings are currently being held by phone, so you don't need to leave home to appeal a denial. But, you will need to act quickly—You only have **45 days** after receiving the denial letter from Medicaid to make your request. Learn more with our fact sheet on [Appealing a Medicaid Denial](#) and the [Advocate's Guide to Fair Hearings](#).



Learn More

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has information for families and professionals on the therapies that your child may get at school.

[School-Based Occupational Therapy](#)

[School-Based Physical Therapy](#)

[School-Based Speech-Language Pathology](#)

Did You Know? Now You Know!

Medicaid Coverage for Behavioral Treatment Services

Families with children who are newly diagnosed on the autism spectrum may not realize that behavioral treatment services are a **regular ForwardHealth card benefit**. Unlike in the past, families need to connect **directly** with a Medicaid-enrolled provider of behavioral treatment services. Your child's primary care provider, your Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) service coordinator or the Regional Center in your area can help you find agencies that have services available in your community.

Will We Wait for Services?

While there are no longer delays in Medicaid funding or coverage for these services, families may still have delays due to a lack of providers or openings for new clients at behavioral treatment programs. We encourage families to call back often and ask about other programs or options, like group sessions, while they wait for a provider opening.

What is the Medicaid Benefit?

Wisconsin Medicaid will cover two types of treatment:

1. **Comprehensive Treatment**—Typically early intervention with longer hours (20-40 per week), over a longer period of time.
2. **Focused Treatment**—Addresses specific behaviors and is likely to have fewer sessions.

After you have found a program or agency, that provider is responsible for completing the required **prior authorization (PA) request** paperwork. PA's are reviewed by the Department of Health Services, not a Medicaid HMO or other insurance provider.

If your child is covered by private insurance, the provider will **first** bill that plan. Medicaid will pay for services only **after** your private insurance denies payment. Many private plans must follow Wisconsin's mandate to cover autism services, that includes coverage of \$50,000 for intensive-level services and \$25,000 for non-intensive-level services per year, for up to 4 years. See the revised OCI fact sheet, [Frequently Asked Questions on Mandated Coverage for Autism Services](#).

Children receiving behavioral treatment may also qualify for [Children's Long-Term Supports](#) and/or [Comprehensive Community Services](#) (CCS) if they have co-occurring mental health diagnoses.

To Learn More: The [Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin](#) is a great resource for families to learn more about autism, locate resources and connect you with other families in your situation.

New Resource for Finding Mental Health Therapy Services

The Well Badger Resource Center developed the new [Children's Mental & Behavioral Health Navigator](#). This free, online tool helps families who are struggling to find and fund mental health services for their children. This includes therapy services in addition to other programs and resources.

How it works

Parents, or other caregivers, confidentially answer a few questions on behalf of a child, adolescent or young adult under 21-years old. Based on this information, the navigator provides a customized guide with suggestions for next steps and resources for navigating mental health systems.

If you would prefer to talk with an information and referral specialist, call **800.642.7837**.

Legislative Policy Update

New Statewide Enrollment for Katie Beckett Program

A new, one stop contact for Katie Beckett Program eligibility and enrollment should make life a little easier for families. Centralized enrollment specialists can answer questions, set up a phone interview and help families complete the application to see if your child qualifies for this doorway into Medicaid. See Family Voices updated [Katie Beckett Fact Sheet](#) (also in Spanish). Here's how to contact a Katie Beckett eligibility specialist:

Email: DHSKatieBeckett@DHSwisconsin.gov • Phone: 888.786.3246 • Web: dhs.wisconsin.gov/kbp/index.htm

New Medicaid Transportation Manager Starts Soon!

Starting **November 1**, [Veyo](#) will take over management of Wisconsin's Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT), replacing MTM. Veyo uses a "flexible fleet model" to meet the demand for rides. DHS expects little or no disruption in services for Medicaid members who need rides to medical appointments or are requesting reimbursement for driving their own vehicles.

As the state moves from MTM to Veyo, look for updates from DHS. Family Voices is closely tracking this change to make sure families continue to receive the transportation services they need! To contact Veyo, use the [Veyo Portal](#) to schedule or cancel rides.

COVID and School Safety

As COVID-infection rates continue climbing in Wisconsin's schools, those who have children with more complex medical conditions may be struggling to decide if in-person school is the best choice. Family Voices worked in partnership with Disability Rights Wisconsin to develop a fact sheet with tools to help make this decision a little easier. We've included resources and options that families can use to work with your child's IEP or 504 Plan school team. Links to guidance from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and U.S. Department of Education that support requests for virtual or other options are included. Read the fact sheet [COVID and School Safety](#).

Restarting Safe Education and Testing, [ReSET4kids](#), is another resource to make sure you have the information you need for a healthy school year. The ReSET team asked Wisconsin families, school staff and clinicians for ideas to help children with medical complexity return to school safely during the pandemic. They received 460 responses with **1,100 ideas!** ReSET's team of experts, including families, schools, clinicians and policymakers weighed these ideas to come up with priorities for a safe return to school.

Want to Learn More?



For more information on our articles visit these websites:

Family Voices of Wisconsin
familyvoiceswi.org

•
National Family Voices
familyvoices.org

•
[Finding Your Way: A Navigation Guide](#)

•
[ReSET4kids Restarting Safe Education and Testing](#)

•
[Department of Public Instruction, Special Education](#)



Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

Northeast Region
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin
Fox Valley
877.568.5205

Northern Region
Marathon County Health Dept.
Wausau
866.640.4106

Southeast Region
Children's Hospital Milwaukee
800.234.5437

Southern Region
Waisman Center
Madison
800.532.3321

Western Region
Chippewa County Dept of Public Health
Chippewa Falls
800.400.3678

Trainings for Families and Providers

Fall 2021

All trainings are **FREE!**

All fall and winter sessions are **virtual using Zoom**

To register go to
familyvoiceswi.org/learn

Did You Know? Now You Know!

You'll learn about resources and services for children with disabilities and special health care needs from birth through young adulthood. We will cover health insurance and how to best use your benefits, Medicaid, long-term supports and community resources.

Date: **November 4**

Medicaid Made Easy

Gain a solid understanding of Medicaid programs for children. This session is focused on how these programs work for Wisconsin families to cover the services and supplies they need.

Date: **December 15**

Thinking about Supported Decision Making

We explain decision-making supports and tools available in Wisconsin for adults with disabilities. We discuss: decision making as a learned skill; what happens legally at age 18; the guardianship process and its impact on a young adult; other tools like Power of Attorney and Release of Information Forms; and Supported Decision Making Agreements.

Dates: **November 10**

December 14

What's After High School?

This is a broad overview of the transition to adult life for young adults with disabilities and covers: planning for a young adult's future in the community; the role of school; long-term supports; moving to adult health care providers; legal and financial planning; advocacy; and self-determination basics.

Dates: **September 28**

October 5, 20 and 26

November 2 and 17



Sponsored by Family Voices of Wisconsin and the Regional Centers for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs.



Connect With Us!

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Circles of Life Conference 2022

CALL FOR PRESENTERS

Apply NOW to present at the 2022 Circles of Life Conference!

Parents, family members, providers or anyone who has experience and knowledge to share is encouraged to apply.

Application Deadline: October 20th

Never Presented Before? Ask about a Mentor.
(Remember your audience will be family members like you.)

To Apply and Learn More
circlesoflifeconference.com/call-for-presenters

Circles of Life is Wisconsin’s annual, statewide conference for families who have children of any age with disabilities and the professionals who support them. The conference will be an in-person event, with virtual options for participants.

JOIN US
MAY 12 - 13, 2022

HOLIDAY INN
STEVENS POINT

About Family Voices

If you have a child with a disability or special health care need, you’ve come to the right place! We’re here to help you **navigate** the services available to your family. It’s a complicated system and our goal is to provide you and your family with some tools. **Connect** with other families, learn how to **advocate** for your child, and discover how you can be a voice for all children with special needs.