

## **BUREAU OF AUTISM SERVICES**

### **ADULT COMMUNITY AUTISM PROGRAM** **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Pennsylvania is now offering services **specifically tailored to the needs and goals of adults with autism spectrum disorders (ASD)**. The Adult Community Autism Program (ACAP), one of two new programs for adults with ASD offered by the Bureau of Autism Services, was designed:

- **just for adults with ASD;**
- with **input from adults with ASD and their families;**
- to be staffed with providers **trained specifically in the needs of adults with ASD;** and
- to **connect adults with ASD** to health services from physicians and other people trained to work with adults with ASD.

ACAP offers individualized, flexible services aligned with participants' service needs and goals. All services are monitored and coordinated by trained supports coordinators. Services can be adjusted as participants' goals change or in times of crisis. ACAP participants receive the support needed to achieve their employment, independent living or social goals. Skill development is provided along with any necessary behavior support and medication management. In addition, families' essential role in identifying needs and monitoring outcomes is recognized, valued and encouraged.

*Why do families and individuals choose the Adult Community Autism Program?*

- Services **designed** for individuals with ASD and their families
- Program **managed** by and staffed with trained autism professionals
- Staff and providers **trained, plus many with prior experience**, in working with individuals with autism
- **Coordination of physician and community support services** to support the individual and his or her family, thus reducing the amount of time families spent on these tasks

*What are the goals of the Adult Community Autism Program?*

- Provide specialized autism supports to adults with ASD
- Tailor supports based on individual's needs
- Help people achieve their employment goals
- Support greater participation in community activities
- Support with development of peer and social networks
- Decreased crisis episodes and the need for hospitalizations

*What role do families play in the Adult Community Autism Program?*

- Families play a vital role in all program areas
- Families' knowledge of the individual with ASD is considered key to accurate assessments and service planning
- During service planning families help determine priorities and desired outcomes
- Families assist with monitoring the quality of service provided to assure services are helping participants reach their goals

*How does someone know whether to apply for ACAP or the new Adult Autism Waiver? Can you apply for both, or will applying for one make you ineligible for the other one?*

There is a chart on our website (need link) comparing ACAP and the new Adult Autism Waiver. This chart is designed to help individuals with ASD and their families figure out which program best matches the needs and preferences of the applicant, and whether he or she is eligible. A person may apply for both programs, although when it comes time to actually enroll, he or she will need to select only one.

*Won't switching programs be disruptive or unsettling to people with ASD who already receive services?*

Change can feel scary or disconcerting, but providers trained specifically in ASD will support participants during transition. ASD-specific services, tailored to individual needs and goals, may be a better fit and actually improve quality and satisfaction.

*What if an individual with ASD has lived in isolation and isn't comfortable around others?*

Staff trained in autism will assist the individual to enter or accept services at his/her own pace, and will help him or her identify priorities so that choices can be made on which services are needed to meet those priorities. In addition, trained staff members will help each individual and family work through issues of isolation

*With the current budget crisis, is there any danger that someone may be accepted into ACAP, only to end up with nothing at all if the program does not get funded?*

We fully expect that ACAP, as well as the Adult Autism Waiver, will be included in the state budget.

### Eligibility

*Who does the Adult Community Autism Program serve?*

This program only serves adults (age 21 or older) with ASD. Autism is 1 of 5 *Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDDs)* in the DSM-IV-TR. Also known as *Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)*:

- Autistic Disorder
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder- Not Otherwise Specific (PDD-NOS)
- Asperger Syndrome
- Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD)
- Rett's Disorder

*Where is Adult Community Autism Program offered?*

Currently ACAP is active in Dauphin, Lancaster and Cumberland counties, and has just been expanded to Chester County.

*What if someone needs or has been receiving 24 hour supports in their home – can their needs be met by the Adult Community Autism Program?*

People who need 24-hour supports right away are not eligible for ACAP. However, once a person is enrolled, they can receive 24-hour supports if that level of support becomes necessary.

*If eligibility starts at age 21, how far ahead of that date can someone apply to ensure no gap in services?*

A person may apply for ACAP up to three months prior to his or her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Staff from the Bureau of Autism Services will usually wait until within a few weeks of the person's actual birthday to first meet with the applicant. Services cannot start until the first of the month after the applicant turns 21.

*I have heard that to be eligible for ACAP, you have to meet an "ICF Level of Care." What does that mean?*

A detailed explanation of ICF level of care may be found online at the Bureau's website – [www.autisminpa.org](http://www.autisminpa.org). The Level of Care eligibility worksheet used by ACAP was adopted from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. It is used to determine if an applicant has substantial limitations in three out of six areas of life activities including:

- Self-care
- Expressive/Receptive Language
- Learning
- Mobility
- Self-direction
- Capacity for Independent Living

*What is the usual length of time from application to acceptance in the ACAP program, and how long after that do services usually start?*

The turn around time from time of application to when services are delivered is approximately 6 weeks. This time period can be affected by whether the applicant already has Medical Assistance and how soon the applicant and his or her family complete and return the forms.

*Does the 200 person limit on the number of participants in the ACAP program include all four counties, or is the program targeting 200 participants per county?*

The two hundred participant limit refers to the total number of people ACAP will serve in all four counties.

*Is that number likely to grow if there is more demand?*

At this point, that is the number of people ACAP was approved to serve by the Federal Government. A forthcoming census report will show a very dramatic increase in the number of individuals on the autism spectrum in the Commonwealth who will be turning 21 within the next 15 years. This dramatic increase will require people to continue to advocate and lobby their legislatures to increase funding to meet the growing need.

Services

*What types of services does the Adult Community Autism Program offer?*

- In-home supports with everyday activities
- Assistance in preparing to work, including development of employment skills, help finding a job, or volunteer opportunities
- Social and life skills training, to promote community integration
- All physician services
- Medication management by physicians, all with ASD training, many with autism experience, and with available consultation from a Doctor of Pharmacy to review and adjust medications as needed
- Behavioral specialists, who consult with other providers to meet behavioral needs
- Crisis intervention, including extra supports to assist during difficult periods and while transitioning from hospitals or institutional settings.
- Family Support Services to assist families in helping participants succeed
- Supports coordinators trained and experienced supporting individuals with ASD

*I am still confused about exactly what types of services are covered by ACAP. Are the services equivalent to, or more limited, than those provided under the new Adult Autism Waiver?*

A complete list of the ACAP services can be found on our website: [www.autisminpa.org](http://www.autisminpa.org). The comparison chart on this site shows the differences between ACAP and the Autism waiver.

*What will ACAP services look like for my son/daughter? What can we expect?*

Services provided through ACAP are designed on an individualized basis to meet the specific needs of each participant. Individual needs and interests are determined and addressed when the participant, family and provider team develop the participant's Individual Support Plan (ISP). The ISP specifies the services a participant will receive, the reason(s) those services are needed, and the goals and objectives of the services.

*Is transportation ever provided under ACAP? How do participant get to the programs or services covered in the program?*

Non-medical and non-emergency medical transportation to services covered under the Medical Assistance Program are available through ACAP, when they are necessary to help the participant meet goals identified in their ISP. Transportation services are individualized and provided on a one-to-one basis, to participants in their home as well as in the community.

*The Bureau of Autism Services flyer explaining ACAP seems to suggest that an ACAP participant can only receive 8 hours per day of services and no more. Is this correct?*

No, that is not correct. The guidelines state that at intake individuals will need less than 16 hours a day of paid or unpaid supervision. A participant's individual service plan will reflect the number of hours determined necessary to meet that person's needs. Once enrolled in ACAP, if there is a need for more than 16 hours a day of services, the ACAP provider (Keystone Autism Services) will be responsible for providing the needed services, up to 24 hours a day.

*What if an individual isn't interested in or ready for employment services?*

That's OK- outcomes and services are based on individual priorities and assessed needs and desires.

### Providers

*Who provides services under ACAP -is there really only one provider?*

Keystone Autism Services (KAS) is responsible for coordinating and providing all services to ACAP participants, including physician services. KAS uses a combination of its own staff and contracted providers.

*In the past, providers have not seemed to know or understand anything about ASD - how will this program be different?*

All staff and providers participating in the ACAP program must undergo training in ASD before interacting with participants. Ongoing training and support is also available.

*What is the amount and type of autism training that providers of ACAP services are required to complete?*

Keystone provides a three-week orientation to all ACAP employees. They have hired master's level clinicians and the minimum level of education for direct care staff is a bachelor's degree. All medical providers, including physician office staff, are required to participate in training designed collaboratively by the Bureau of Autism Services and Keystone Autism Services. Training topics include:

- ASD: What It Is and Isn't
- Communication Challenges
- Positive Behavior Supports
- Assessment for Life and Social Skills
- Life Skills-Evidence Based Practices
- Health Care

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- Transition to Work
- Functional Behavioral Assessment.

*My adult child has a long term TSS/ Respite person who has helped her in the community and in other settings for many years. Would she still be able to access this support person for some services if she is in ACAP?*

Keystone Autism Services (KAS), the ACAP provider, is responsible for the delivery of all supports and services needed by a participant. Keystone will contract with other agencies and organizations to deliver certain services. All respite and current service providers are welcome to submit an application for employment with KAS; applicants must meet KAS' employment standards and participate in an interview process.

*What system is in place to handle any individual or family complaints and concerns regarding ACAP services and providers?*

ACAP participants and/or their representatives may contact their ACAP provider (Keystone) directly regarding any problems with services Keystone oversees. Keystone has developed a formal complaint and grievance process that is distributed in writing to ACAP participants and their families. For problems or concerns with Keystone, contact the Bureau of Autism Services.

*In the counties where ACAP is currently offered, are services being delivered smoothly? Are there enough providers to adequately handle all services promised?*

ACAP is currently serving participants in Cumberland, Lancaster and Dauphin Counties and there have been no issues with service access and delivery.

*How many doctors are currently in the system and how far will we need to travel to see a doctor?*

A substantial provider network is currently in place; a listing of network participants is reviewed with applicants prior to enrollment. In addition, KAS continues to add physician practices who are Medical Assistance (MA) providers to the ACAP provider network. Additionally, if an ACAP applicant wants to remain with their current doctor, KAS is willing and eager to talk to that physician about the ACAP program and invite them to become a part of the ACAP network of providers. In order to participate in the ACAP network of providers, physicians must be MA providers.

*What about psychiatrists, neurologists and dentists? Do you have those types of providers in ACAP yet?*

**KAS is working to secure these specialists for ACAP.**

*What if my regular psychiatrist or physician lives in another State?*

KAS has stated that if the professional would accept Pennsylvania MA, Keystone would offer to bring them into their provider network.

*What if the participant is in another state, becomes ill and needs to either go to a hospital or see a physician?*

The physician would be paid by KAS, once an invoice is submitted. The hospital or emergency room visit would be covered by the regular MA program.

*Will the Medical Director of KAS be in discussions with other physicians and other psychiatrists that are currently seeing the applicant?*

The medical director may consult with any other medical professionals that are seeing the participant if the need is identified.