



## 2024 Annual Report Highlights

---

*The Mississippi Autism Advisory Committee (MAAC) was created by House Bill 1125 (2011 Regular Session) as the Legislature recognized an urgent need for strategies on how to best identify, treat, educate, accommodate and employ people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and assist their families. We are presenting two recommendations for your consideration this session.*

### **Recommendation #1: Establish an Autism Adult Waiver**

The establishment of a separate ASD adult waiver for the autistic community in our state. Autistic adults in need of long-term services and support spend years on waiting lists before receiving such services through Medicaid. The published data suggests that the majority waiting have unmet needs for functional skills services, employment or vocation services, and mental and behavioral health services.

MAAC recommends that legislators establish an Autism Waiver for the adult population designed to provide autism-targeted, long-term, community-based, person-centered, supports and therapeutic services for adults aged 18 years and older. This waiver will enable adults with ASD to participate in their community including having jobs and will enable home and community living as they age as an alternative to institutional care.

### **Recommendation #2: Increase Psychiatric Medicaid Rates**

The second recommendation is for increased Medicaid rates for the following psychiatric codes related to psychological testing and assessment: 90791, 96130, and 96131. In Mississippi, we have very few Medicaid providers accepting new patients who can conduct such specialized evaluations. Due to the low rates, many private practices are not accepting Medicaid—leaving adults without the necessary evaluations to gain access to other mental and behavioral health services, vocational rehabilitation, and related services.

Mississippi currently ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> in access to mental health care. By increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates for 90791, 96130, and 96131, this increase will incentivize providers to accept Medicaid clients and create a pathway for undiagnosed autistic adults to get a formal medical diagnosis. Once diagnosed, access to other critical areas are opened including services through the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) for vocational rehabilitation, mental and behavioral interventions, applied behavior analysis therapy, to name a few.

Our autistic population continues to grow in Mississippi. The recommendations above are designed to support individuals through the lifespan with Autism Spectrum Disorder.