

ASD-Coverage Mandates Lead to More Treatment for Children

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Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)—especially those age 5 and younger—are receiving significantly more services in states that require private insurers to cover treatment for the disorder, finds a national analysis.

Researchers at the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health and the University of Pennsylvania analyzed data from three nationwide private health insurers from 2008 through 2012, when most states enacted ASD coverage mandates. They compared the experiences of people with ASD through age 21 in states with and without mandates.

The analysis, published in *Health Affairs*, found that in states with a mandate, insurers spent an average of \$77 more per month on autism-specific offerings and service use rose.

“Spending increases on outpatient services of this size mean that kids are receiving many more services per year paid for by private insurance—these changes due to the mandates are big enough to make a real difference in these children’s lives,” says study leader Colleen L. Barry, chair of the [Bloomberg Department of Health Policy and Management](#).

Laws in 46 states and Washington, D.C., require private health insurers to pay for ASD treatment.

Although the mandates vary—some require coverage for children in narrow age ranges, for example—the study found that children covered by a mandate tended to receive more ASD-specific treatment the longer a mandate has been in place.

“The hope of patient advocates and policymakers was that these insurer mandates would increase care for children with autism, and they seem to have done that,” Barry says. “In fact, the impact was even larger than we had expected.”

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IMPORTANT: Florida is one of the states requiring that private insurance companies pay for treatment for Autism. Check your policies and ask to see the place in the policy that does NOT provide coverage if they deny it!!

– Alana