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FEATURED

Alabama lawmakers assign \$11 million for behavioral health services

Associated Press 17 hrs ago



Brynn Anderson | Associated press



MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Gov. Kay Ivey said Alabama lawmakers have set aside \$11 million in the recently passed budgets for behavioral health services for Medicaid-eligible children.

The funding is aimed at expanding community and home-based services, [Al.com](#) reported . It's being offered by the Alabama Department of Mental Health for children and youth with severe emotional disturbance and those with autism spectrum disorder.

"These are needed services that I believe will help many of our children and youth live happier, more productive lives," Ivey said in a statement. "At the same time, these services will help us save money in other areas. This proves that in Alabama, we can be both compassionate and good stewards of taxpayer dollars."

Vivian Spears' adult son lives with autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disabilities. She said she is pleased with the additional funding.

"It definitely should improve the quality of life for children and youth, and it brings hope to families and caregivers who are affected by autism spectrum disorder," Spears said.

Federal matching dollars will add another \$25 million for a total of \$36 million in available funding for the 2019 fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1.

Two years ago, the Alabama Disability Advocacy Program and the Center for Public Representation filed a complaint with state officials alleging the state's Medicaid program was violating federal law by not providing adequate screening and home or community-based services for more than 25,000 eligible children and youth with "behavioral, emotional and-or psychiatric disabilities."

"This funding will enable poor children with severe emotional disturbances and autism spectrum disorders to obtain life-altering services," ADAP's Legal Director Geron Gadd said. "These services are not only clinically-effective, they are cost-effective, and we are heartened that the state is acting to meet the long-unmet needs of these children."

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