

Stop the Planned Early Intervention Waiting List

Monroe County plans to establish a **waiting list for all new referrals to Early Intervention for evaluation** on December 3rd, 2018. Children with conditions like Down syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and other significant special needs will be placed on waiting lists for weeks and months waiting for services they are legally entitled to receive.

Children cannot receive a comprehensive evaluation and begin receiving Early Intervention services without a Service Coordinator.

The proposed waiting list will place Monroe County in violation of state and federal law, which require Service Coordinators to be assigned promptly and a child's service plan to be developed within 45 days of referral.

This unprecedented action is due to a dire shortage of Service Coordinators in the area, which has been caused by New York State repeatedly cutting reimbursement rates for that service over the past 10 years. Over just the past year, two of the few remaining community-based agencies providing Service Coordination to children and families in Monroe County closed their programs after sustaining years of financial losses providing the service.

The establishment of this waiting list will create more lengthy delays in a system that is already failing the children and families in need of critical services.

Responsibility for this crisis lies with New York State, but Monroe County can and should take immediate steps to limit the consequences to children and families in the County. The County currently employs 15 Service Coordinators, and has shouldered an increasing share of cases as the number of community providers shrank in recent years.

What's Needed

- Monroe County must immediately hire at least 6 new Service Coordinators. Doing so will give the County's Department of Public Health the staffing it needs to avoid the establishment of a waiting list.
- Monroe County should join with The Children's Agenda, ROC The Future, and advocates from across the state to urge the Governor and the Legislature to make significant investments in the Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education systems in the 2019-20 State Budget. Specifically -
 - Raise reimbursement rates for Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education Services by at 30%.
 - Increase reimbursement from private health insurance companies by changing state law to prohibit them from denying coverage for EI services.
 - Establish funding and reimbursement rate equity between the Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education systems.