

# SUPPORT THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Waitlists for pediatric therapy have skyrocketed, leaving thousands of children waiting far too long for the critical care they need. Providers face growing challenges in recruiting and retaining therapists, who are drawn to higher-paying opportunities elsewhere. **A meaningful rate increase is essential to ensure children receive the therapy they need** and to reduce long-term costs associated with delayed care.

## WHO DO WE SERVE?



Pediatric home health therapy provides essential support for children with complex medical conditions and developmental delays under the Texas Medicaid Comprehensive Care Program. Services include physical, occupational, and speech therapy, tailored to children who often need multiple therapy types and have limitations that make regular transportation or frequent clinic visits challenging.

## **GROWING CONCERNS - INCREASING WAITLIST FOR PEDIATRIC THERAPY SERVICES**

Additional funding was last provided in 2021 (87th Legislature) to address the growing waitlist for pediatric homecare therapy services, however, in 2024 the waitlist continues to grow and wait times for needed services are long, with therapy providers pointing to available workforce as a key issue.

From December 2022 through November 2023 (latest available information), waitlist cases have increased by 155 percent – from 1,975 to 5,046. (Biannual Therapy Reports, HHSC, Dec 2023, June 2024). This increase occurred despite the number of active providers rebounding since the public health emergency (PHE) period and currently staying above pre-PHE levels.

Waitlists are present statewide, with school-aged children and children in rural areas of Texas being most affected.

# HOW DID WE GET HERE?

## RATE CUTS AND RATE METHODOLOGY CHANGES



- Rate cuts for pediatric therapy in 2011 and 2014



- Rate methodology change (with cuts) that moved from encounter-based billing to billing for 15-minute units, that do not account for the unique costs of the home health model such as travel time, mileage, licensure, regulatory compliance, and limited service hours



- Partially restored in 2019, with an additional restoration in 2021 for pediatric home care therapy providers.
  - Even with these restorations, rates are below pre-cut levels.

## CURRENT ENVIROMENT



- Access to care – Home care providers report losing therapists to higher-paying providers. As Texas's population grows, home care providers are struggling to recruit and retain qualified staff to meet community needs.



- Changing needs and demand driven by changing (increasing) acuity in the client population, driven in part by increased numbers of NICU graduates.
  - While close to 60 percent of waitlisted clients receive services within three months, these delays can mean critical time lost for children, resulting in the need for longer and ultimately more costly therapy.

## SOLUTIONS FOR TEXAS CHILDREN

To ensure children with disabilities and developmental delays receive essential, medically necessary therapy services at home, Texas leaders must increase funding for therapy rates.

**Recommendation:** We are advocating for a **10% increase in therapy reimbursement rates across all settings** to ensure that children with disabilities and developmental delays receive the essential, medically necessary therapy services they need.

**TO LEARN MORE OR TO CONNECT WITH A MEMBER OF OUR TEAM, CONTACT TAHC&H BY EMAILING [GOVERNMENTAFFAIRS@TAHCH.ORG](mailto:GOVERNMENTAFFAIRS@TAHCH.ORG).**