



# Expanding Access to Early Childhood Autism Diagnostic Evaluation Through Cross-System Collaboration

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ON BEHALF OF: Autism Assessment Capacity Project & Autism ALERT

FUNDED BY: Health Share of Oregon

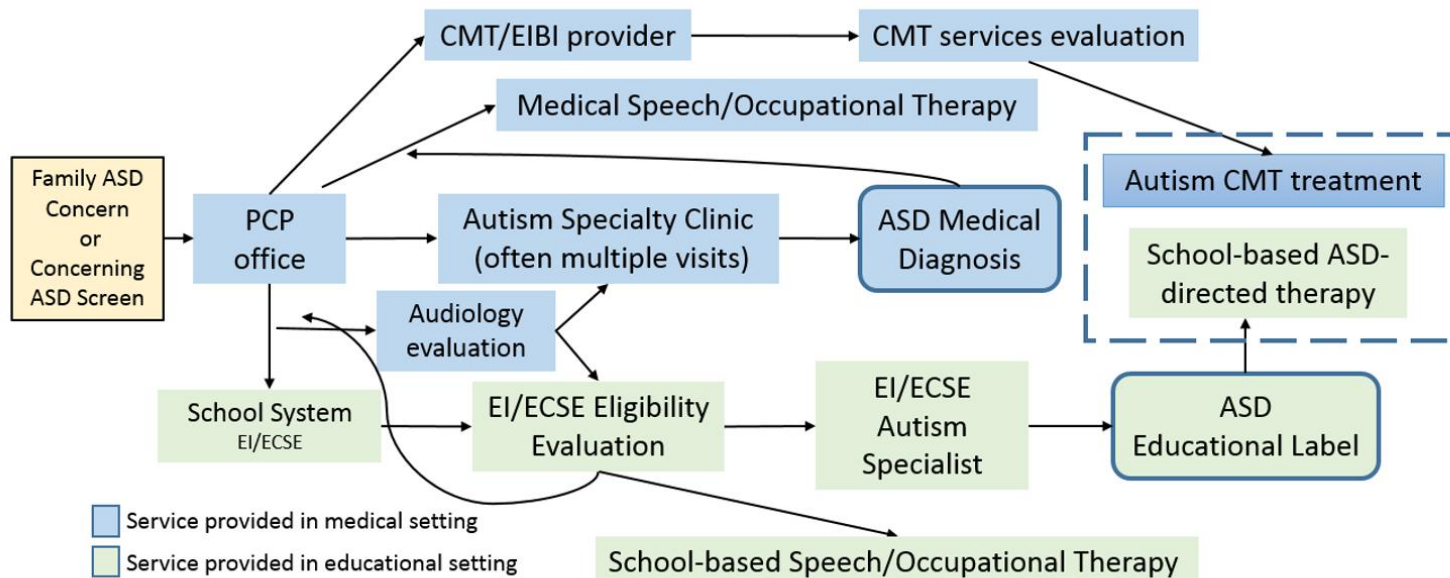


# Situational Analysis

- Autism prevalence: 1 in 31 children
- ~755 board certified DBPs in the US
  - More retiring than entering the workforce
  - For comparison, there are ~2300 pediatric oncologists and 1 in 260 children are diagnosed with cancer
- ~40% of families lost to follow-up when referred to specialty centers

# Why We Came Together

Figure A1. A Typical Autism Diagnosis Process



# Who We Are

Launched in 2021, the Autism Assessment Capacity Project (AACP) is a collaborative effort to expand access to autism diagnostic services. In 2023, Health Share funded AACP to address access barriers in Portland Metro through targeted initiatives.

AACP's Steering Committee is comprised of leaders from:

- Health Share of Oregon
- CareOregon
- Children's Health Alliance
- Legacy Randall's Development & Rehab Program
- Kaiser
- Providence Children's Development Institute
- OHSU Institute on Development and Disability







# Vignettes from Oregon Providers

*“There is a large need for more physicians to be able to make this diagnosis. Currently, **Yamhill County** does not have any providers that provide this service. I want to be able to offer autism assessments and learn to coordinate and work with the schools for ongoing follow up and care.”*

*“**Douglas County** is lacking resources to diagnose autism in a timely fashion. If I could diagnose in the office and speed this process along kids would get therapies sooner which has higher likelihood of better outcomes.”*

*“We practice out on the **coast of Oregon** with many lower income and working families. It can be hard for them to get out to **Portland** for anything.”*

# Addressing Access at Multiple Levels



Bilingual Care  
Navigation



PCP Diagnostic  
Training



National PCP  
Training  
Consortium

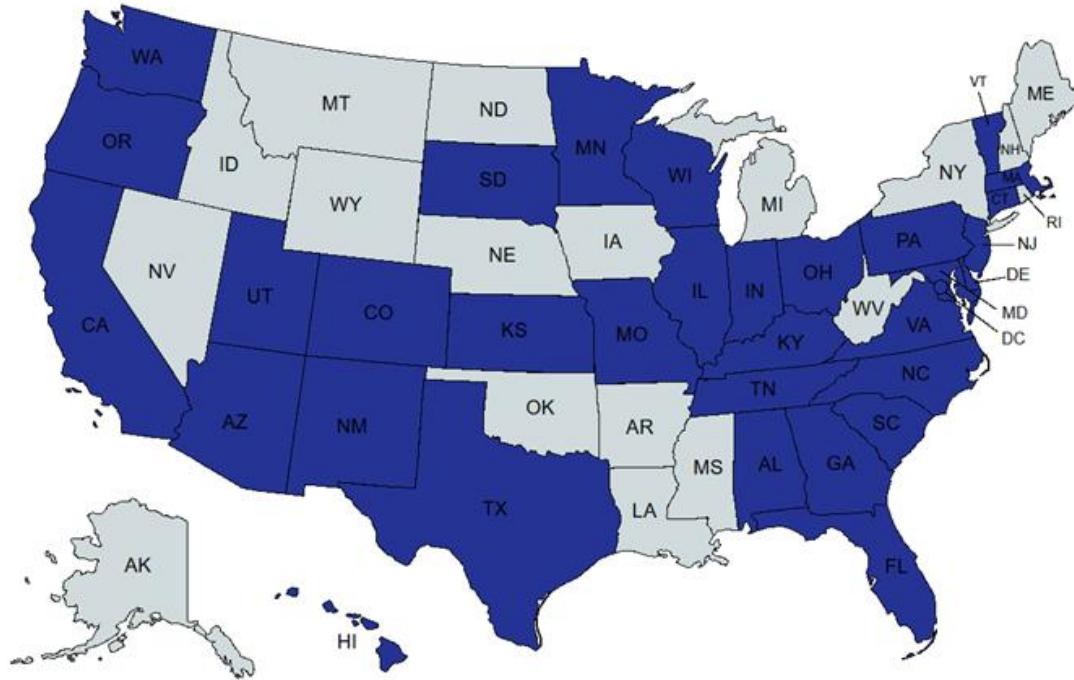


Enhanced  
Payment for  
PCPs



Intersystem  
Collaboration

# PCP Training Consortium Uptake



# AACP's PCP Training

- Evidence supports:
  - Trained PCPs align with expert “gold standard” diagnoses for young children with a clear autism symptom profile
  - Caregiver satisfaction is high
- 49 PCPs trained in Portland Metro
- Planned S. Oregon cohort in 2026
- Avg age at diagnosis: 30.9 months

## 2025 AUTISM ASSESSMENT TRAINING FOR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

*Developed by the Autism Assessment Capacity Project (AACP)*



### ABOUT

The AACP will be offering a training for **Licensed Primary Care Providers (MD, DO, NP, and PA)** based in the Portland Metro Area in the screening, identification, and diagnostic evaluation of young children with suspected autism.

Ongoing training will run May through September 2025 and will use online, in-person, and tele-consultative modalities led by subject matter experts in autism.

Upon completion of this free training, PCPs will be trained in using the DSM-5 Parent Interview and the Screening Tool for Autism in Toddlers and Young Children (STAT™) and be able to diagnose children 18–47 months who meet validated inclusion criteria.

**2025 IN-PERSON TRAINING DAYS:**  
FRIDAY, MAY 9 & SATURDAY, MAY 10  
8:30AM–4:30PM

**8-BIWEEKLY VIRTUAL ECHO SESSIONS:** THURSDAYS AT 12:30–1:30PM STARTING IN MAY 2025

**FREE STAT™ CERTIFICATION TRAINING AND KIT** (VALUED AT OVER \$1500)





# PCP Training Curriculum

**Month 1:** AAP Pedialink Training Course – *Autism Identification and Collaborative Care*

**Month 2:** In-Person Training Days x2: Training in diagnostic interviewing and validated observational diagnostic tools

**Month 3-5:** 8-Session ECHO Series

- Didactics & case reviews
- Designed to strengthen both diagnostic and primary care delivery

# CareOregon's Alternative Payment Model

General Peds x2 hours:

- See ~4-6 patients
- Well child & sick visits

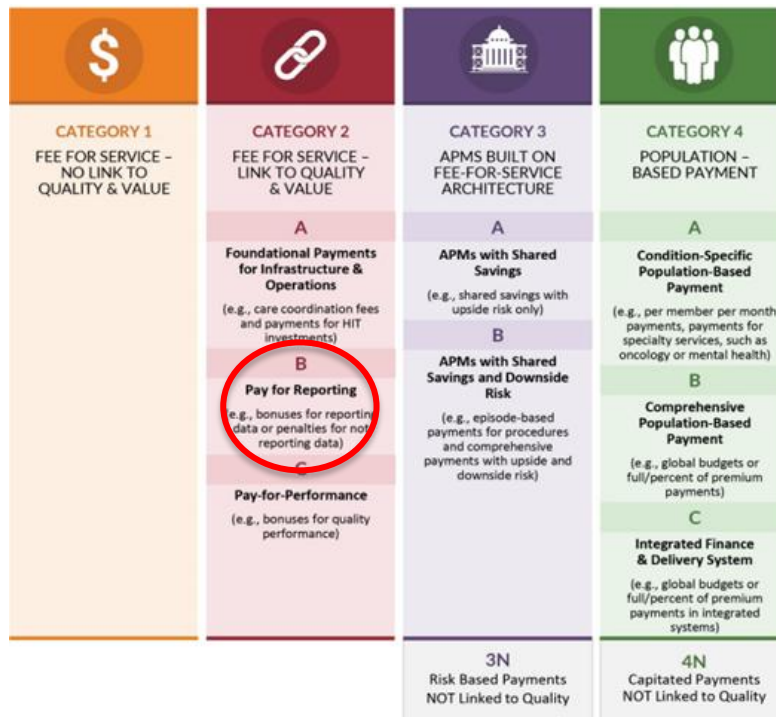
Total payment = \$516

Autism Assessment x2 hours

- See 1 patient

Total payment = \$316

Opportunity Cost = \$200 (39%)



Health Care Payment Learning & Action Network's APM Framework

# Intersystem Collaboration

Kaiser | Legacy Randall | OHSU CDRC | Providence CDI

- Standardized wait time measurement
- Developed an Eligibility Criteria Reference Guide
- Cross-system collaborative learning on clinic processes & efficiency outcomes:
  - Intake processes to optimize throughput
  - Pediatrician utilization
  - Techniques for minimizing 'no shows'





# What is Autism ALERT?



Autism ALERT supports both primary care providers and family members of children aged 0-5 who qualify for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) evaluation and services.



## For Primary Care Providers:

- Training on autism screening
- Access to Family Navigation referrals
- Increased connection rates with EI/ECSE, evals, and service uptake
- Reduced time to medical diagnosis



## For autism clinics:

- Waitlist management and de-duplication
- Family assistance with paperwork and scheduling
- Ensure EI enrollment prior to medical diagnostic eval
- Post-diagnosis connection with services



## For parents and families:

- Telehealth family navigation services:
- Case management
- Emotional support
- Psychoeducation regarding ASD
- Information on EI/ECSE and ASD diagnostic services





# ACCESS Project *Linking Medical Diagnosis with Educational Eligibility*

Medical Provider  
(Pediatrician,  
Psychologist, NP, PA)  
Formal medical  
diagnosis



Educational Staff  
(Autism Specialist, SLP,  
School Psychologist, etc.)  
Educational eligibility  
evaluation



Parent Partner  
System and resource  
navigation  
Attends team meetings  
with families  
Follow-up with family



**OCCYSHN  
Technical  
Assistance**

- Monthly statewide ECHO
- Quarterly Role-Specific Community of Practice Meetings
- Clinical consultation from experts at OHSU



# Our Impact

- **More Families Reached**

- >128 families received bilingual care navigation
- ~17,779 Health Share members (0-5 years) across >32 clinics now have access to PCP-led ASD diagnostic evaluations
- 5–10% duplicate entries removed from specialty clinic waitlists

- **Expanded Workforce Capacity**

- ~300 PCPs and clinic staff trained in ASD screening
- 49 PCPs trained to complete ASD diagnostic evaluations
- Developed an APM to pay PCPs for their ASD diagnostic work

- **Earlier Diagnosis**

- 30.9 months: avg age at diagnosis by AACP-trained PCPs



# Testimonies to our Impact

*“We have families who raved about how quickly they got their diagnosis and then connected to services.”*

—Oregon Family2Family

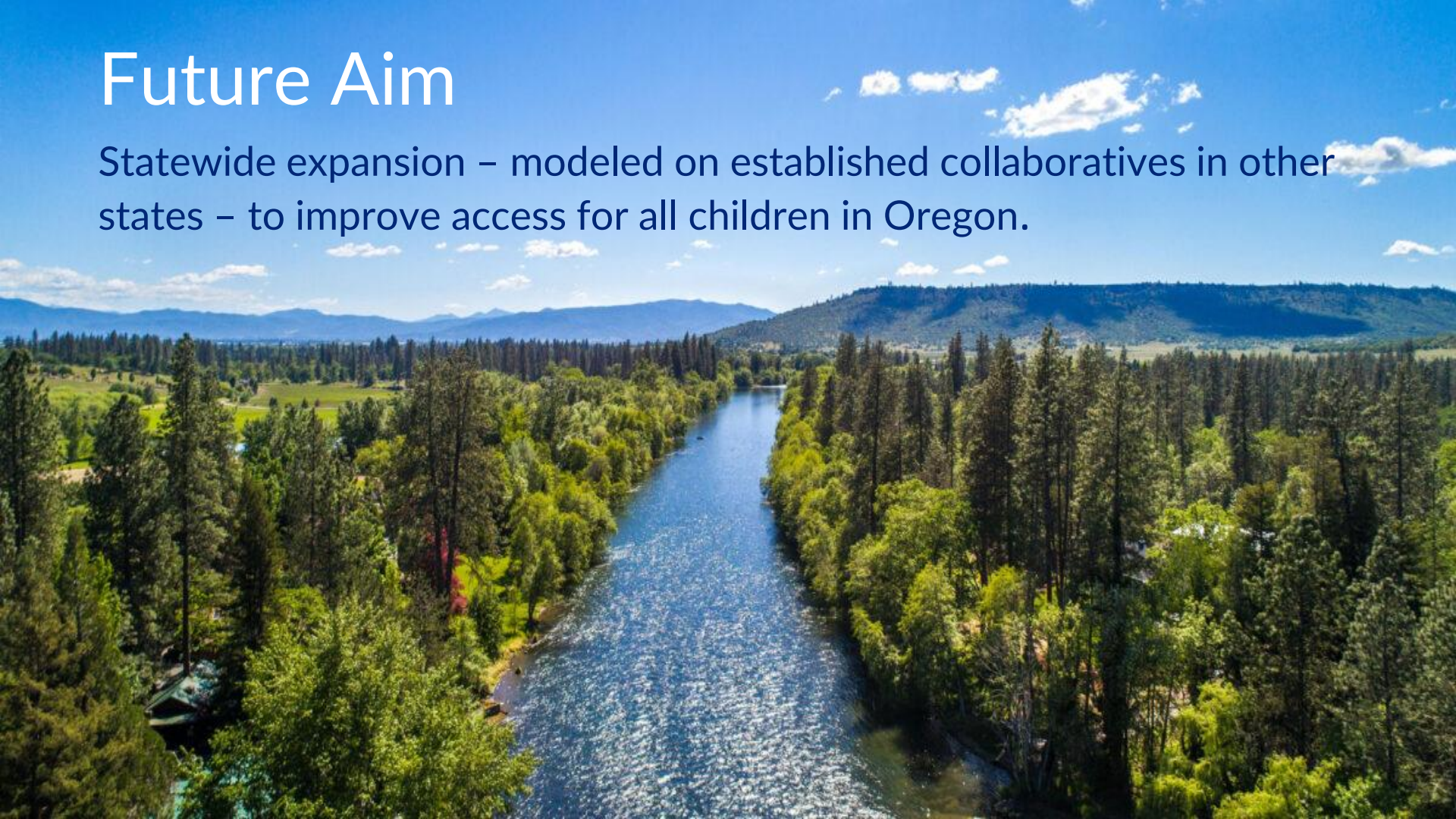
*“I have seen great benefit for the families who are getting routed for earlier assessments. They have prompt access for autism assessment versus waiting many months. Our multiple clinic locations can refer internally so it’s a great opportunity for a broad population swath to have expanded access through our clinic.”*

— 2025 AACF PCP Cohort Applicant



# Future Aim

Statewide expansion – modeled on established collaboratives in other states – to improve access for all children in Oregon.







# Thank You

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