



HCBS 1915(c) Waiver Eligibility Process Updates

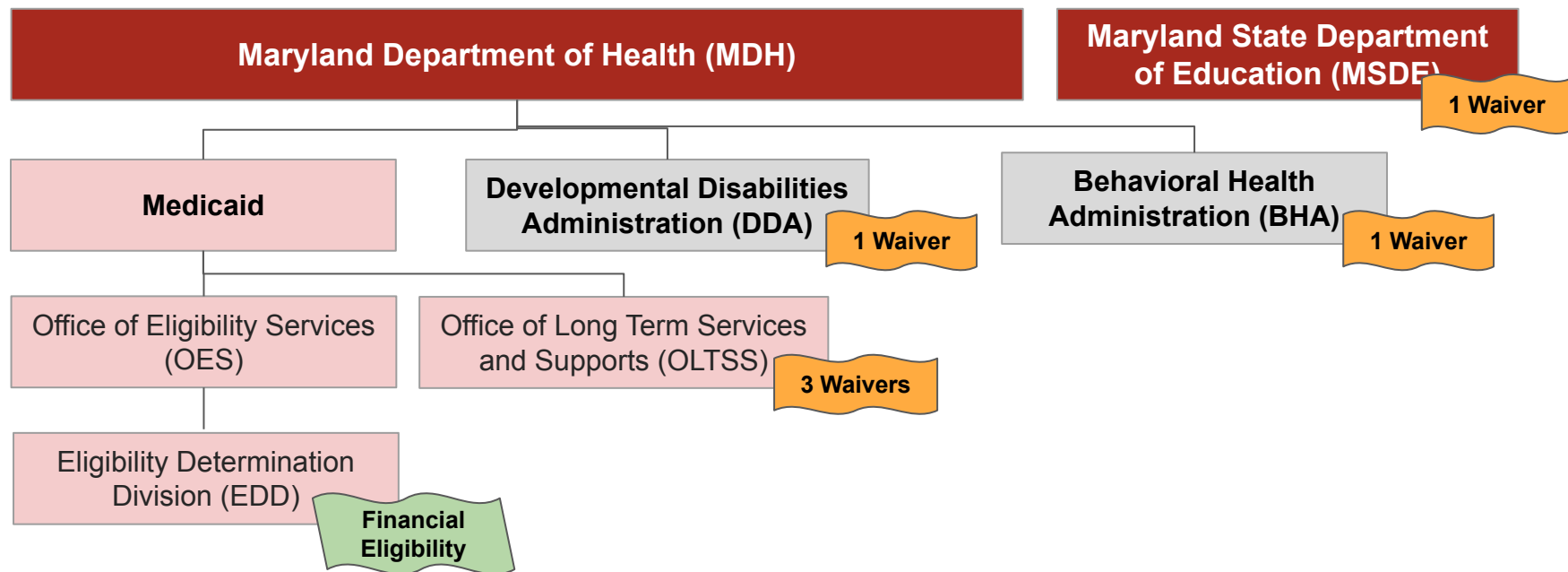
February 23, 2026

Overview | Background on HCBS Waivers

- The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is committed to delivering accessible, sustainable, high-quality, and affordable health care services for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waivers allow people with disabilities to receive care and supports in their homes and communities, rather than in institutional settings. These waivers are a critical lifeline for individuals and families across Maryland.

Overview | Structure

Maryland Medicaid in collaboration with the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) and other “operating state agencies” (OSAs) operates 6 HCBS disability waiver programs.



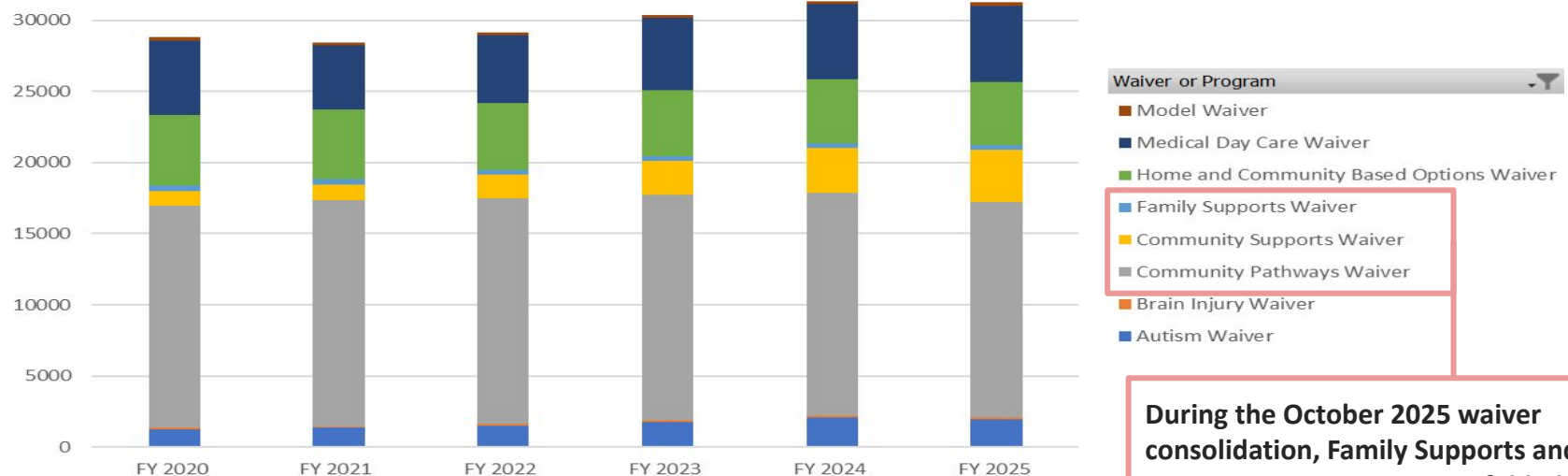
Overview | 6 Medicaid Waivers

A Medicaid HCBS 1915(c) waiver is a special program that **allows states to use Medicaid funds to provide long-term care services in community settings**, like someone's home or an assisted living facility, instead of in institutional settings.

	Waiver	OSA	FY25 Enrollment	Waiver Slots	Registry/ Waitlist	Target Member Group
1	Community Pathways Waiver (1984)	DDA	19,152	21,209	3,804	Serves individuals with developmental disabilities; no min or max age limit
2	Autism Waiver (2001)	MSDE	1,936	2,950	4,472 Waitlist 1,454 Registry	Serves individuals who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder; age 1 to 21
3	Brain Injury Waiver (2003)	BHA	112	165	N/A	Serves individuals who are diagnosed with a brain injury; ages 22 and older
4	Model Waiver (1985)	OLTSS	218	220	172	Serves medically fragile individuals; no min or max age limit, but must be enrolled prior to age 22
5	Home and Community- Based Options Waiver (2003)	OLTSS	4,477	6,348	23,750	Serves individuals with physical or age-related disabilities; ages 18 and older
6	Medical Day Care Waiver (2008)	OLTSS	5,353	7,913	N/A	Serves individuals with physical or age-related disabilities; ages 16 and older
	Total		31,248	38,805	33,652	

Overview | Waiver Growth

In 2022, Maryland passed the End the Wait Act that made it easier for people to get off of waiver waitlists. This resulted in a 16% (over 6,000) increase in unique waiver participants from 2020 to 2025.



During the October 2025 waiver consolidation, Family Supports and Community Supports were folded into Community Pathways.

Overview | Waiver Criteria

In order to be enrolled in a Medicaid waiver service program, the applicant must meet medical, technical and financial eligibility criteria:

1. Medical Eligibility

Determined by a Level of Care (LOC) tool.

2. Technical Eligibility

- Be a permanent resident of MD
- Choose HCBS services over institutional services
- Have a plan of service that supports health and welfare

3. Financial Eligibility

Includes both an income and asset review.

Key Challenges

We have heard clearly from participants, families, advocates, and providers, that the current Medicaid waiver, application and renewal processes have not worked as they should. Improving these processes is a top priority for the Moore–Miller Administration and part of a broader effort to make Maryland state government more responsive, transparent, and people-centered.



Key challenges

- Lack of clear, timely communication, leaving families uncertain and anxious about coverage and care.
- Delays in provider payments, which threaten the stability of essential services.
- Difficulty reaching MDH or case workers for assistance.
- Conflicting or unclear reasons for waiver terminations, making it hard to understand what steps are needed to reinstate coverage.

Improvements | Immediate Term

Improving our Systems

- Partnering with the Department of Human Services and MDBenefits to conduct a full review of the Eligibility and Enrollment (E&E) system used for waiver applications and renewals.
- Identifying near-term technical fixes and longer-term modernization needs to make the system faster, more reliable, and easier to use for families, providers, and staff.

Strengthening Processes

- Enhancing internal workflows so applications and renewals move more smoothly from start to finish.
- Expanding training for Coordinators of Community Services (CCSs).
- Implementing new training platforms for MDH staff, agents, and case managers.
- Exploring clearer and more streamlined escalation pathways for urgent cases.
- Requesting additional staffing to manage high-volume periods, prevent backlogs, and ensure timely processing.

Improving Communications

- Launching an updated HCBS waiver website with clearer, more user-friendly information and new communications materials.
- Developing plain-language guidance to help individuals and families better understand the application and renewal process.
- Reviewing and improving notices so they are clearer, more consistent, and easier to act on.

New Communication Resources

As part of this effort, MDH has released new and updated materials to help families and providers navigate the waiver process. These materials are intended to reduce confusion, set clearer expectations, and help people understand what to do, and who to contact, at each stage of the process:

- **HCBS Waiver Website:** A central hub for information on long-term services and supports, including waivers and eligibility.
 - <https://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/ltss/Pages/home.aspx>
- **“Joe’s Guide to Applying for the Community Pathway Waiver”:** A step-by-step, plain-language guide designed to walk individuals and families through the application process.
 - <https://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/ltss/Documents/Joes-Guide-to-Applying-for-the-Community-Pathway-Waiver.pdf>