



## Medicaid Stories from Colorado's 6th Congressional District

### Mary Ryan

Mary's optimism for her daughter's future comes through as she talks about how things have changed for Muirgheal since she became eligible for the Children's Extensive Support (CES) Medicaid Waiver program almost three years ago. Muirgheal was diagnosed with autism at four months of age. She is non-verbal and has epilepsy. Now 13, she attends Sky Vista Middle School in Aurora. Medicaid pays for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy at home twice per week. It also provides for special camps in summer so Muirgheal can continue her therapeutic group environment when school is out of session.



Medicaid provides for respite services, creating time for Mary to work outside the home and attend to the needs of all of her family, including husband Peter and son Dominick. The family has also connected with others in the community who have children with special needs and "that has been a real bonus for us," says Mary.

"I feel that Muirgheal will have some kind of autonomous life," Mary muses as she considers what maturity will bring for her daughter. "It's all about freedom and autonomy here." Mary remembers the system for those with disabilities in Germany, where Peter's work had taken them for several years before coming to Colorado. "We have IDEA (Individuals With Disabilities Education Act) here. In Germany, children are segregated in school. While they receive a good education, it basically prepares them for life in an institution or other segregated environment."

"Before we had Medicaid, we were paying out of pocket for all her medications and other supports. After we became eligible for the Waiver, our financial circumstances

improved, but more importantly, we finally had time to be together as a family. Now we feel much better about the future, for all of us."

### Kathy Powell

Kathy's son, Johnny, is a truly social being. "He loves being with people and most find him delightful," Kathy says as she talks about her son, 31, who lives with her in her home. Johnny was born with Williams Syndrome, a genetic condition characterized by medical problems, including congenital heart disease, developmental delays, and learning challenges. These often occur side by side with striking verbal abilities, highly social personalities and an affinity for music.

Ironically, it is Johnny's sociability that makes it so unsafe for him to be left alone. He is unable to discriminate a risky situation from a safe one. Johnny requires "line of site" supervision when out of the home, because a moment's inattention leaves him vulnerable to a world of dangers that he does not recognize. Kathy retired early to care for Johnny. The Supported Living Services (SLS) Medicaid Waiver program pays for a day program 3-4 days per week with Kathy providing the rest of his care at home.

"The day program is his life," Kathy says. "If it were not available, he would have no safe place to be in the community."

Kathy worries about reductions or the loss of the Medicaid program that is so important to her family. "Disability is indiscriminate....we all need a safety net to protect those among us who cannot take care of themselves."

