Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

When Accessibility Helps You Reach New Milestones

Kathryn Padgett - Columbia, South Carolina

That's Medicaid *shares stories of people covered by Medicaid at critical points in their lives, underscoring the importance of stable health insurance coverage in building a Culture of Health.*

At seven years old, Mallory was diagnosed with autism, asthma, and ADHD. To address her daughter's health needs, her mother, Kathryn, enrolled Mallory in BabyNet, South Carolina's early intervention program. When Mallory aged out of the program, her family could no longer afford speech therapy – an intervention critical for improving Mallory's language skills.

Through her job at Family Connection of South Carolina, Kathryn learned Mallory qualified for a Medicaid program called Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act (TEFRA).

TEFRA is an eligibility pathway in the Medicaid program for children with disabilities or complex medical needs. The federal government allows states to choose whether they want to implement TEFRA, which takes into consideration the child's income rather than household income. Kathryn says, "Many families do not learn about the benefits of TEFRA and the assistance it provides to children with disabilities until they need it."

Under TEFRA, Mallory resumed receiving services, including speech therapy, at prices her parents could afford. Access to the therapies contributed to Mallory reaching pivotal milestones critical for development. At 11 years old, Mallory is thriving. She loves outdoor activities, specifically climbing trees. She has also taken up painting and plans to pursue an art career when she grows up.

"Medicaid gave my daughter access to essential experts who helped improve her quality of life," Kathryn says. "TEFRA's role in helping families access services for disabled relatives makes a big difference for those of us who have kids with ongoing medical needs."