

## October Waiting List Story- Meet Matt!

I am Matt. I was born 8 weeks early and was still a big baby! My mom always knew I was going to be a big guy and she was right. Despite my size, I always had a lot of trouble controlling all my muscles and making them coordinate just the way I want. Even after I grew up, I needed a lot of help getting ready and getting through the day. I could never even brush my teeth, go to the bathroom, or shower by myself.

I have needed extra supports because I have always had intellectual disabilities and autism. My family knew I had some developmental delays when I wasn't even a year old. I was much different than my older brother. It wasn't until about 15 years later that we got a clear diagnosis of autism. When I was 13 years old, we found out about the ID Waiver and got on the waiting list.



The years we had to wait were long for all of us. I could never use as many words as some people do and I got really frustrated when I wanted something and I couldn't have it, or when I didn't want to do something I had to do. I guess I often had strong feelings I was unable to manage because I could not verbalize them very often. As a pretty big and strong guy, I usually managed any strong feelings physically. Sometimes when I have been angry I hit my mom. I have pushed her down and into walls even though I always loved her so much. I hurt her a lot and I was really sorry but I just need to get those feelings out. Afterwards I always told her how sorry I was and she forgave me, but it was always

hardest for me to forgive myself. I would tell her I was sorry even two weeks later.

A lot happened while I was on the ID Waiting list. I got bigger than my mom and it became impossible for her to keep us both safe. Sometimes I got upset without any warning. Sometimes the police come to visit me. They helped me calm down and they were really nice. I liked when they came.

Once when I was really upset I turned over my big bookshelf with a lamp on top. The lamp got caught under it and my mom was working really hard to get the bookcase up because we could smell the lamp catching the rug and books on fire. Luckily my older brother came home as it was happening and moved the bookcase. Another time, I pulled my big dresser over and broke it so there were big nails sticking out the back. My brother helped my mom then, too. After that, my dad secured all the furniture to the walls to keep me safer.

Sometimes being in the car was frustrating so I kicked my mom's seat. We had to replace it because the springs were popping out and could cut me or my mom. One day I in the car I was really mad. We were going fast and I kicked her in the head when she was driving. She pulled over and called many friends before she reached one that could come and help us get home. My mom was really grateful. Although my mom didn't want to, sometimes she still had to drive me places by herself, like doctors' appointments. She was always scared that we could get into an accident. Another time I was in a parking lot with my mom and refused to get in the car. This frightened her because

I never understood not to run out in front of cars and now she could not get me into the car. A nice man stopped and helped Mommy to keep me safe. I didn't mind getting into the car for him.

I have always loved pretty girls. I loved to be around them even when I was little. At my prom I was dancing with some really pretty girls and one was so pretty but I couldn't find a way to tell her, so I hit her. I didn't want to hurt her, though. I was trying to communicate and get her attention.

I remember one day when I was upset and grabbed the chandelier in the kitchen. I cut my hand on the glass. My mom and dad took me to the Emergency Room where I got 4 stitches. My parents could never ever leave me or do things on their own, not even go together to the grocery store, or go out for dinner for eighteen years because I needed a lot of help. One of them always had to be home with me and out of love, they were always there for me. By the time I was 18, I was six feet tall and weighed about 240 pounds so Mommy could not care for me alone, and my dad had a hard time, too.



Then, after 5 years of waiting, I got an ID Waiver when I was 18 years old. We were so happy! I had care providers to come help me and I really liked them and they really liked me! We used the Waiver to put vinyl flooring, plexiglass windows, and unbreakable light fixtures in my room. We even got a new shower so I would not have to climb over the side of the tub, which several times, made me almost fall.

I was so much safer and we were all happier. After I graduated, I tried a job that wasn't a good fit for me, but my case manager helped me find another place to go called Horizons. I loved it there and they loved me. They understood me and we did things I liked. I was so happy and so safe.

I was there for nine months and they were the best nine months ever! I had special transportation that helped me and they were my friends. Then, in 2011, I suddenly passed away from a problem deep in my brain that no one ever knew I had.

My family and friends miss me every day. I was challenging in many ways but I always had a good heart and I brought many people a lot of joy and still do. My family feels I was a blessing to them for 23 ½ years. We are just talking about the difficult times now, to help people who don't understand, how the Waiver can save families and even save lives. During the time we had to wait for the Waiver, I could have run into the street or been hurt some other way, or seriously hurt someone else because Mommy didn't have the help she needed.

She is helping me tell this story now. We don't want anyone to wait five years or more for a Waiver like I did. They change people's lives for the better and keep people safe.

I would like you to remember that each of the more than 10,890 people on the Waiting List have a story and need your help.

You can change their futures, too! Please fund the waiting list for Waivers! End the wait, start a life.

You can see more about Matt here- <https://www.facebook.com/famof.mattenos?fref=ts>