

Why Most 1915(i) Pipelines Break.

Five breakdown points across the pipeline, what happens at each, and where they could be fixed.

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Most 1915(i) challenges are not caused by lack of effort. They are caused by breakdowns between steps in the pipeline. Across providers, care managers, and managed care organizations, the same friction points continue to surface.

What follows is a map of the five most consistent breakdowns — where each one sits, what it costs, and what would stabilize it.

BREAKDOWN 01

Referral to care manager assignment gap.

WHAT HAPPENS

Referrals are submitted, but provider teams don't know who the assigned care manager is — or how to reach them.

IMPACT

Delays in assessments, stalled communication, client disengagement.

FIX

Establish a standard care manager identification and contact process within 48–72 hours of referral.

BREAKDOWN 02

Assessment scheduling breakdown.

WHAT HAPPENS

Assessments are delayed due to unclear ownership, missed follow-ups, or lack of urgency.

IMPACT

Clients sit in limbo without movement toward services.

FIX

Assign clear ownership of scheduling and weekly tracking of pending assessments.

BREAKDOWN 03

Authorization delays — the hidden bottleneck.

WHAT HAPPENS

Assessments are completed, but authorizations stall due to incomplete documentation or unclear justification.

IMPACT

Services cannot start, even when the need is clear.

FIX

Implement a pre-submission review checklist to ensure alignment with medical necessity and service definitions.

BREAKDOWN 04

Documentation misalignment — the audit risk zone.

WHAT HAPPENS

Notes reflect case management (coordination) instead of skill-building (required for 1915(i)).

IMPACT

Audit risk, denied claims, compliance issues.

FIX

Train staff to consistently document skill-building, coaching, and client capacity development.

BREAKDOWN 05

Service delivery to billing disconnect.

WHAT HAPPENS

Services are delivered, but documentation doesn't support billing requirements.

IMPACT

Lost revenue, rework, audit exposure.

FIX

Align documentation language with billing expectations from the start — not after the fact.

What stabilizes the pipeline.

Stabilizing a 1915(i) program is less about working harder and more about clarifying ownership, tightening communication, and aligning documentation with intent at every step of the pipeline.

Every breakdown above describes the same underlying failure in a different place: a step happens, but the context required for the next step doesn't move with it. Effort doesn't close that gap. Structure does.