

Autism Resources in Massachusetts The Basics for Parents/Guardians

If your child has received a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), learning all you can about the disorder and where to get support can help you gain the tools necessary to support your child, family and yourself. While the types and availability of services may vary depending on where you live, a combination of family and professional interventions can improve your child's development.

Where to Start?

- Children should be referred to an appropriate program as soon as a delay is suspected. You should not wait for a definite diagnosis of ASD as this may take some time. Talk to your child's pediatrician to determine an appropriate referral based on your child's age and where you live.

Key programs:

- Birth – age 3: **Early Intervention** programs provide family-centered services to help children who qualify to develop the skills they will need to continue to grow into happy and healthy members of the community.
 - To find your local program, call Family TIES of Massachusetts at 1-800-905-8437 and ask for a listing of Early Intervention programs in your city/town or search their online directory at <http://massfamilyties.org/ei/eicity.php>.
- Age 3 – 22: **Special Education/Individualized Education Program (IEP)** school programs are designed to meet the unique needs of your child with special education needs, and to assure that your child receives the services and assistance necessary to make effective progress.
 - Contact your local public school and ask to speak with the special education department for more information about having your child evaluated for special education services.
 - Also see **A Parent's Guide to Special Education-** http://fcsn.org/parents_guide/pgenglish.pdf, created by The Federation for Children with Special Needs and The Massachusetts Department of Education

Next Steps

- **Identify health insurance programs to help your family.** You can apply for MassHealth, our state's Medicaid program, which may pay for a broad range of

health-related services for your child. Even if a family earns a higher income, you are encouraged to apply. Covered services may include inpatient and outpatient services, testing, medications, therapies, medical equipment and supplies, and home-based nursing and personal care services. If you have private health insurance, you may want to ask what ASD services are covered and if you are eligible to have MassHealth as a “secondary insurance.”

To learn more, contact:

- Community Support Line at **Mass. Department of Public Health’s Division for Children & Youth with Special Health Needs**: 800-882-1435 or visit <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/division-for-children-youth-with-special-health-needs>
- **Massachusetts Family Voices**: 800-331-0688, Ext. 210 or visit <https://fcsn.org/mfv/>
- **MassHealth**: 800-841-2900 or visit www.mass.gov/masshealth

- **Department of Developmental Services (DDS)** Provides specialized services and supports to children and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities, including ASD. The types of specialized services and supports include day and residential programs, employment programs, family supports, respite, and transportation.

To apply:

1. Download, complete and send an application form, along with all required documentation, to your local DDS Regional Office (listed on application)- <https://www.mass.gov/lists/dds-eligibility-forms>

OR

2. Contact your Regional Eligibility Team directly at the Intake Referral Number:
 - **Central/West Region** Intake Referral Number: 413-205-0940
 - **Metro Region** Intake Referral Number: 781-314-7513
 - **Northeast Region** Intake Referral Number: 978-774-5000 x850
 - **Southeast Region** Intake Referral Number: 508-866-8800

- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI) – Cash Assistance** Children from birth up to age 18 may receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. Your child must have a physical or mental condition that very seriously limits their activities and your family must have low or no income and limited resources. A state agency makes the disability decision. They will also ask for information from medical and school sources and other people who know your child. If they

need more information, they will arrange an evaluation for your child at no cost to you. It typically takes 3 to 5 months to decide a child's SSI disability claim.

To apply:

1. Call the **Social Security Administration** (SSA) at 1-800-772-1213 to make an appointment to file a disability claim at your local Social Security office.
2. Bring the necessary documentation with you to your appointment. For more information look for "Apply for Benefits" and the "SSI Child Disability Starter Kit" - <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disability/>.

- **Personal Care Attendant (PCA) Program** a MassHealth program that helps people with disabilities (children starting at age 3) live at home by providing funds to hire PCAs. PCAs can help with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) such as mobility/transfers, medications, bathing or grooming, dressing or undressing, range of motion exercises, eating, and toileting.

To apply:

1. Contact your local Personal Care Management (PCM) agency. To find your local PCM call MassHealth Customer Service at 1- 800-841-2900 or search <http://findpca.org>.
2. They will evaluate your child's need for PCA services and submit a prior authorization request to MassHealth after approval by your child's pediatrician or nurse practitioner. If MassHealth approves PCA services, you are responsible for recruiting, hiring, training and scheduling your own PCA(s).

Family Support and Advocacy

- **Autism Support Centers** Each community-based Autism Support Center offers families exciting events and opportunities that promote empowerment, training and networking opportunities. They offer information on community resources and services in the areas of social skill development, sensory integration, vacation programs and more. Ask them about the availability of the Autism Waiver Program which offers additional services when available.
 - **Metrowest Region** - Autism Alliance
508-652-9900 | www.autismalliance.org
 - **Central Region** - HMEA's Autism Resource Central
508-835-4278 | www.autismresourcecentral.org/
 - **Metro Boston Region** – TILL, Inc.
781-302-4600 | www.tillinc.org/services/autism-support-center
 - **Norfolk Co./Southwest Region**- The Family Autism Center
781-762-4001 x412 | www.arcsouthnorfolk.org/family-autism-center/

- **Northeast Region** - Northeast ARC
978-777-9135 | www.ne-arc.org/services/autism-services/autism-support-center/
 - **Southeast Region** - Community Autism Resources
508-379-0371 | www.community-autism-resources.com
 - **Western Region** - Autism Connections (Pathlight)
413-529-2428 | pathlightgroup.org/programs-and-services/autism-connections/
- **Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN)** Provides information, support, and assistance to parents of children with disabilities through its website, publications, phone consultation, conferences, workshops, and related services. Programs include the Special Education Parent Center, Family Support Center, Health Advocacy Center, Family and Community Engagement Center, and Parent-Professional Leadership Center.
617-236-7210 | 800-331-0688 | www.fcsn.org
 - **Family TIES of Massachusetts** A network for families and professionals which provides information and referral services, emotional support, and trainings to parents of children with youth and special needs.
1-800-905-TIES (8437) | <http://www.massfamilyties.org/>