

# Autism Spectrum Disorders



There are three main agencies which can provide services for a child with autism in the Inland Empire. We have provided information to help parents and professionals navigate these systems and better understand what each system can provide to families.



www.ieautism.org (951) 220-6922

## Medical Insurance - Diagnosis

A medical diagnosis can be the foundation to obtaining services through your medical insurance, school district, and/or regional center services. A Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation (CDE) is the best practice for diagnosing a child with autism and should be done by a licensed physician or licensed psychologist (developmental or neuro-psychologist preferred) who has experience conducting developmental evaluations and has training and direct experience assessing children with developmental disabilities.

The Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation typically encompasses the following components:

- A parent/guardian interview.
- Direct play observation.
- Review of relevant medical, psychological, and/or school records.
- Cognitive/developmental assessment.
- Measure of adaptive functioning.
- Language assessment (by a speech language pathologist).
- Sensory evaluation (by an occupational therapist).
- and, if indicated, neurological and/or genetic assessment to rule out biological issues (will be referred by a developmental pediatrician, pediatric neurologist, and/or geneticist).

A report will be generated for the insurance company so any needed services may start. A more complete report will be sent to the parents 8-12 weeks for their records.

## School District - Eligibility

Special education is not a place or class. It is a service provided to students with special educational needs. To be eligible for special education, the disability must also have a negative effect on the child's education. A medical diagnosis of autism does not guarantee special education services.

A medical diagnosis of Autism is made by a doctor using symptom criteria set in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). An educational eligibility is decided by a team of various school professionals and a student's parents. The team decides if the student qualifies for services.

**ELIGIBILITY for SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES:**  
Under state law, school districts determine that a student has autism or a disorder like autism if he or she exhibits any combination of the following autistic-like behaviors that adversely affect educational performance:

- (1) An inability to use oral language for appropriate communication;
- (2) A history of extreme withdrawal or relating to people inappropriately and continued impairment in social interaction from infancy through early childhood;
- (3) An obsession to maintain sameness;
- (4) Extreme preoccupation with objects or inappropriate use of objects or both;
- (5) Extreme resistance to controls;
- (6) Displays peculiar motoric mannerisms and motility; and
- (7) Self-stimulating, ritualistic behavior.

[5 C.C.R. Sec. 3030(g).]

## Regional Center - Eligibility & Diagnosis

Regional Centers are nonprofit private corporations which contract with the California Department of Developmental Services to provide or coordinate services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities.

### Eligibility for 0-3 years:

Infants and toddlers with a developmental delay or disability, or who are at risk for a developmental delay, may qualify for Early Start services. Early Start eligibility criteria requires at least one of the following: a developmental delay of at least 33% in one or more areas of either cognitive, communication, social or emotional, adaptive, or physical and motor development including vision and hearing; an established risk condition of known origin with a high probability of delayed development; a high risk of having a substantial developmental disability due to a combination of biomedical risk factors.

### Eligibility for 3+ years:

To qualify for Inland Regional Center services a person must meet all eligibility criteria and reside in Riverside or San Bernardino counties. Learning Disabilities, or disabilities that are solely psychiatric or physical in nature, are not included in the definition of developmental disabilities.

Inland Regional Center may provide services to individuals with Intellectual Disability, Autism, Seizure disorder & Cerebral Palsy which

- \* originate before the age of 18
- \* are expected to continue indefinitely
- \* are determined to be a "substantial disability" with significant limitations in three or more of the following areas: Self-care, language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.

ACCESSING

# Autism Spectrum Disorders

## Services



 **AUTISM SOCIETY**  
*Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism  
Inland Empire*

[www.ieautism.org](http://www.ieautism.org)

(951) 220-6922

[info@ieautism.org](mailto:info@ieautism.org)

## Medical Insurance

To obtain a Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation (CDE), parents should schedule a well-child visit with their assigned Primary Care Physician and share their concerns for Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Primary Care Physician can make a referral for the Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation (CDE) after completing a developmental surveillance and screening.

Parents can contact the number on their medical insurance card. Some insurance companies have a department assigned to helping families through this process. This department is sometimes referred to as "Behavioral Health." A Behavioral Health Representative is available to assist the parent and advise about the medical referral and CDE assessment process.

Your Medical Insurance has an obligation under the California Timely Access to Care Law to provide non-urgent appointments with specialists within 15 business days.

While a Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation provides a diagnosis, it is not required to wait for its completion before starting Behavioral Health Treatment (e.g. Applied Behavior Analysis) services through Medi-cal when medically necessary.

For further information visit [dhcs.ca.gov](http://dhcs.ca.gov)

## School District

All students may be referred for special education concerns by parents, teachers, and other involved parties. School policies, state and federal laws will be followed for testing. After the assessment, the Individual Educational Program (IEP) team (Including parents) will make decisions about eligibility and services.

If you would like to refer your child for special education services, provide the school district with a letter. Include your child's name, date of birth, and name of school. It is important to explain the areas where you have concerns, such as; speech, reading, math, social skills, or behavior, so that all areas will be tested. Be sure to keep a copy of everything for your files. The school will have 15 calendar days from date of getting the referral to send a written reply.

You may get an assessment plan that requires your approval to test your child or a denial of your request, giving the reasons why. In both cases, you'll be sent a copy of your Parental Rights & Procedural Safeguards, which will explain all of the related timelines.

For further information visit [cde.ca.gov](http://cde.ca.gov)

## Regional Center

The application process (for ages 3 and above) requests medical, educational, and behavioral records (or a signed consent for release of that information from schools, insurance companies, or medical organizations). It is beneficial to submit comprehensive psychological reports or evaluations completed through your medical insurance that indicate a medical diagnosis of autism. Comprehensive evaluations often include use of autism assessment tools and measures of adaptive functioning.

Submitting psychoeducational reports, IEPs and other evaluation reports is also helpful. The Regional Center will use those reports to help determine eligibility. Although having these reports is very helpful, it does not guarantee eligibility for Regional Center Services

**Application Process for ages 3+:**  
You may review important information and access an application on the IRC website. Visit [www.inlandrc.org](http://www.inlandrc.org) and in the menu, click the "Eligibility/Intake" tab. Scroll down to "Intake Process - Ages 3 and Older". To request an online application, fill out the 2 question "questionnaire" and then fill out and submit the application that opens up after the questionnaire. If you wish to receive the application in the mail, for Riverside County call 951-826-2648 and San Bernardino County call 909-890-3148.

**Application Process for ages 0-3:** Visit our website for details [www.inlandrc.org](http://www.inlandrc.org)  
Call IRC Riverside County Early Start Intake - (909) 890-4763 Call IRC San Bernardino County Early Start Intake - (909) 890-4711

Thank You to the Inland Empire Autism Collaborative for compiling this information.