



STARTING **STRONG**

UNDERSTANDING SERVICES
FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM



IEAutism.org



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UNDERSTANDING SERVICES
FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

INTRODUCTION

Early intervention services play a pivotal role in the lives of children with Autism and their families. These services, designed to support children from birth to age five, encompass a range of therapies and educational programs to address developmental delays and enhance overall development. These services can include many different types of therapies (e.g., speech, occupational, behavioral, play, etc.) and be delivered by professionals from different systems (school, medical, Regional center).

These services can be essential for children with Autism.

- **Developmental Progress:** Early intervention can significantly support a child's development. It helps children learn essential skills such as communication, social interaction, and motor abilities during a critical period when their brains are most adaptable.
- **Better Long-Term Outcomes:** Research shows that children who receive early intervention are more likely to have better long-term outcomes. This includes improved language skills, higher IQ levels, and better adaptive behaviors.
- **Family Support:** Early services often include family training and support, which can help parents and caregivers understand their child's needs and how to support their development best.
- **Reduced Need for Special Education:** Early intervention can reduce the need for special education services later in life. Children are better prepared for school and other social settings by addressing developmental delays early.
- **Enhanced Quality of Life:** Early intervention can help manage sensory experiences and behaviors, improving the quality of life for both the child and their family.

Thanks to a grant from the California Department of Developmental Services, the Autism Society Inland Empire has compiled this toolkit to help families understand what services are available. We are here to support children, parents and caregivers have the information and resources so that each child can reach their full potential.



Autism Society
Inland Empire



**Department of
Developmental
Services**



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We get you because we are you!

The Autism Society Inland Empire supports parents and children from the start. For children, we offer many programs and services - most are free or low-cost!

- Fun Safe Events for the entire family!
- Parent Support Groups to connect with other parents for advice and friendship.
- Educational Workshops with subject matter experts to learn about Autism and treatment options.
- Help with System Navigation. Our Resource Specialists to guide you, support you and help you find local services and specialists.
- Free resource and webinar library available 24/7.

We're here to help you and your child thrive. Visit our website or contact us for more information.



LEARN

MORE



Our Mission

We create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources needed to live fully.

Our Vision

Creating a world where everyone in the Autism community is connected to the support they need, when they need it.



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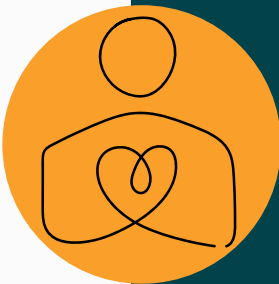
COULD MY CHILD HAVE AUTISM OR A DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY?

- Recognizing Developmental Delays
- Understanding Autism
- Common Co-Occurring Conditions in Young Children with Autism



SYSTEMS

- What Are the Different Systems & Agencies
- Diagnosis Vs Assessment
- Medical Diagnosis & Therapies
- Regional Centers Services
- School District
- Financial Assistance
- Getting Connected



INTRO TO ADVOCACY

- Why Advocacy Is Important
- Tips for Effective Advocacy



Recognizing Developmental Delays

IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD MAY HAVE AUTISM OR NOTICE DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS, IT'S NATURAL TO FEEL A MIX OF EMOTIONS. REMEMBER, YOU ARE NOT ALONE ON THIS JOURNEY. EARLY INTERVENTION CAN MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE, AND SEEKING SUPPORT CAN OPEN DOORS TO VALUABLE RESOURCES AND SERVICES TAILORED TO YOUR CHILD'S UNIQUE NEEDS. EMBRACE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND GROW TOGETHER AS A FAMILY. YOUR LOVE AND DEDICATION ARE THE MOST POWERFUL TOOLS IN HELPING YOUR CHILD SUCCEED.

 **Autism Society**
Inland Empire
Your local Autism connection.



EMPOWERING TOMORROW:

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL THROUGH EARLY INTERVENTION



EXPRESSING THEMSELVES

If your child isn't making sounds (like babbling) or saying simple words, or if they can't understand and follow what you say by the time they're one, you might want to talk to someone that might be able to help.

Early speech and language development are vital for communication skills and later academic success.



GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS

If your child finds it hard to play with other kids, doesn't look at people when they talk, or sometimes gets very upset, there might be ways to support them in feeling more comfortable and happy.

Social and emotional development lays the foundation for healthy relationships and emotional well-being.



DOING THINGS WITH THEIR HANDS AND BODY

If your child has trouble with things like holding a crayon or jumping, or if they're not trying these things at an age where others are, there are people who can show you activities to make this easier for them.

Motor skills are essential for daily activities, academic success, and overall independence.



UNDERSTANDING AND FIGURING THINGS OUT

If your child is having a tough time understanding things or solving simple problems, there are friendly folks who can share activities to help them learn and enjoy doing new things.

Cognitive abilities are fundamental for learning, problem-solving, and academic achievement.



KEEPING SKILLS ALREADY LEARNED

If your child seems to be forgetting things they used to do, like saying certain words or playing in a certain way, there might be ways to help them remember and keep moving forward.

Regression can indicate underlying issues and should be addressed promptly to prevent further delays.

Remember, seeking help early can make a big difference, and there are supportive people who understand and want to assist your child in a way that respects your family's culture and values. Parents who notice one or more of these signs should consult with specialists, to discuss their concerns and explore the possibility of early intervention services.

www.inlandrc.org/eligibility/



Understanding Autism

Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a neurological condition that affects how a person experiences the world. It's called a "spectrum" because it includes a wide range of characteristics & abilities. No two people with autism are exactly alike.



Understanding
Autism

SIGNS & CHARACTERISTICS

More info

Living with Autism means the brain processes information differently. Here are some aspects of common experiences for children with Autism:

- Sensory Sensitivity
- Communication
- Routine and Predictability
- Special Interests
- Processing Time



AUTISM IS A PART OF YOUR CHILD'S IDENTITY, BUT IT DOESN'T DEFINE THEM ENTIRELY. LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, THEY HAVE THEIR PERSONALITIES, INTERESTS, & DREAMS.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

If you know someone with Autism, here are some ways you can offer support:

- Be Patient
- Respect Boundaries
- Communicate Clearly
- Embrace Differences



Common Co-Occurring Conditions in Young Children with Autism

As you navigate your child's Autism diagnosis, it's important to be aware that many children with autism also have additional diagnoses. These common co-occurring conditions can affect your child's overall development and well-being. Understanding that your child may have multiple diagnoses can help you seek comprehensive care and support tailored to their unique needs. Remember, each child is different, and having multiple diagnoses does not define their potential or limit their abilities.



Common co-occurring conditions for younger children with Autism include:

- **Anxiety:** Includes generalized anxiety, social anxiety, and separation anxiety.
- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):** Characterized by difficulties with attention, hyperactivity, and impulsiveness.
- **Sensory Processing Disorders:** Affects how children perceive and respond to sensory information, leading to over- or under-sensitivity to stimuli like sounds, lights, and textures.
- **Gastrointestinal Issues:** Includes problems such as constipation, diarrhea, and abdominal pain.
- **Sleep Disorders:** Includes difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep.
- **Epilepsy:** Seizure disorders, including epilepsy, are more prevalent in children with autism.
- **Intellectual Disabilities:** Can affect learning and development.





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Systems Navigation



- **What Are the Different Systems & Agencies**
- **Diagnosis Vs Assessment**
- **Medical Diagnosis & Therapies**
- **Regional Centers Services**
- **School District**
- **Financial Assistance**
- **Getting Connected**



What Services Each System Can Provide

Understanding these differences and similarities will allow parents and caregivers to navigate the services more effectively and to provide their children with comprehensive support.

Medical Insurance

Age Range: All ages, based on medical need

Service Focus: Provides therapy services and medical support. It covers services such as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), durable equipment, speech therapy, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.

Cost: Pay any deductibles or co-pays if you have them.

Inland Regional Center: Early Start

Age Range: Birth to 35 months

Eligibility: Infants/Toddlers with developmental delays, disabilities, or at risk of delays

Service Focus: Creates and implements an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) to support development and family-centered early intervention.

Cost: Free - serves everyone who is a Riverside or San Bernardino County resident.

Inland Regional Center: Lanterman Eligibility

Age Range: 36 months (3 years and older)

Eligibility: Individuals with a developmental disability that originated before age 18 yrs --Intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, Autism, and other disabling conditions.

Service Focus: Ensuring clients can participate fully in their communities by providing services that support inclusion in educational, vocational, and recreational activities, achieving greater independence through skills training, employment services, and housing support.

Cost: Free - serves everyone who resides in Riverside or San Bernardino County.

School District

Age Range: 3 years to 21 years

Eligibility: The student must have a disability that falls under one of the 13 categories defined by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the disability must adversely affect the student's educational performance. This means the student requires special education and related services to benefit from the general education curriculum.

Service Focus: Provides individualized support that helps students with disabilities access the general education curriculum and meet educational standards.

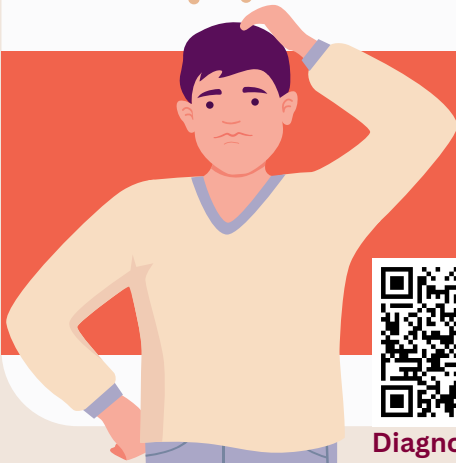
Cost: Free.



Diagnosis vs Assessment

An Autism diagnosis and determining a child's eligibility for services are related but distinct processes.

- **Medical diagnosis:** A qualified healthcare professional diagnoses Autism using your medical insurance. This is often where we tell families to start.
- **Assessments:** Other systems, such as school districts and Regional Centers, will often ask for copies of the child's medical diagnosis to assist them in determining if the child is eligible for their services. Not all children with Autism will qualify for these services.



Medical Insurance

- Diagnosis

A medical diagnosis can be the foundation for 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. This should be done with a licensed physician or licensed psychologist (neurodevelopmental or neuropsychologist preferred) with experience conducting developmental evaluations and training and direct experience assessing children with developmental disabilities.

The Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation typically encompasses the following components:

- A parent/guardian interview.
- Direct behavior and play observations.
- 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 parents and the insurance company.

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.

Educational eligibility is not a diagnosis; it is a decision 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 (Early Start):

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 25% 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; an increased 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.



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Medi-Cal

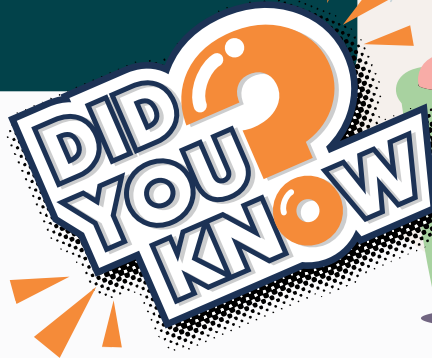
Medical Diagnosis & Therapies

California is known for having some of the most comprehensive insurance laws for children with Autism. The state's autism insurance mandate, established by Senate Bill 946 in 2011, requires health insurance plans to cover behavioral health treatments, including Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and other evidence-based interventions like speech and occupational therapy, regardless of their age or IQ. Medi-Cal also covers all medically necessary behavioral health treatments for eligible beneficiaries under 21.

RESEARCH INDICATES THAT EARLY DIAGNOSIS AND INTERVENTION CAN LEAD TO SIGNIFICANT LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS IN VARIOUS AREAS, INCLUDING SOCIAL SKILLS, COMMUNICATION, AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT.



Autism
Therapies



Medical Diagnosis

Initial Discussion with your Pediatrician:

Because there is no medical test to diagnose Autism, your pediatrician will discuss your concerns, observe your child's behavior, and ask about developmental milestones, social interactions, communication skills, and any repetitive behaviors. Some parents find it helpful to use video to show examples during the doctor visit.

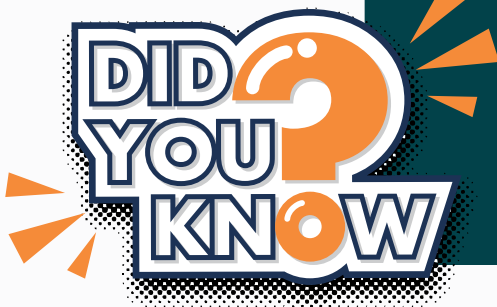


Developmental Screening:

A brief test and questionnaire will help identify any areas of concern that might need further evaluation.

Referrals to Specialists:

For children who may have co-existing conditions like sleep disorders or gastrointestinal issues, it's essential to address these as well. Your pediatrician can help coordinate care with specialists to ensure all aspects of your child's health and development are supported. Some children with Autism also experience trauma, such as neglect or witnessing violence. In these cases, trauma-informed treatments, which are designed to address both Autism and trauma, can be more beneficial.



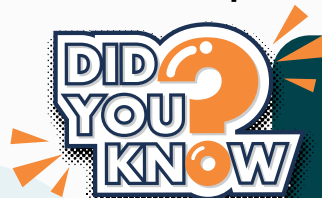
IF YOU FEEL YOUR DOCTOR IS NOT LISTENING TO YOU OR WANTS TO DELAY YOU, TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS, AND SEEK A SECOND OPINION. YOUR CHILD'S WELL-BEING IS THE PRIORITY; EARLY INTERVENTION CAN MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE.



Medical Therapies

If diagnosed, an individualized plan will be created, including therapies like speech therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioral therapy to address your child's specific needs. When your child receives a medical diagnosis, the doctor will often refer to speech therapy, occupational therapy, and behavior therapy (also called ABA or BHT). Still, these are not the only therapies available. At the same time, these therapies are designed to support your child's development and address specific challenges they may face. You will need to balance the time and possibly money it takes to have your child attend these services with your family's needs.

In California, your child does not need a formal Autism diagnosis for your pediatrician to authorize services like Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), speech therapy, or occupational therapy. If your pediatrician observes developmental delays or other concerns, they can refer your child for these therapies to support their development. This early intervention can be crucial in helping your child reach their full potential, even before a formal diagnosis is made.



IF YOU DO NOT HAVE TRANSPORTATION, YOUR MEDICAL INSURANCE COMPANY CAN USUALLY HELP YOU ARRANGE TRAVEL TO AND FROM MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS AND THERAPIES.



List of organizations that provide medical therapy locally



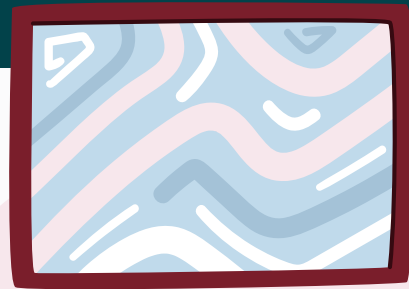
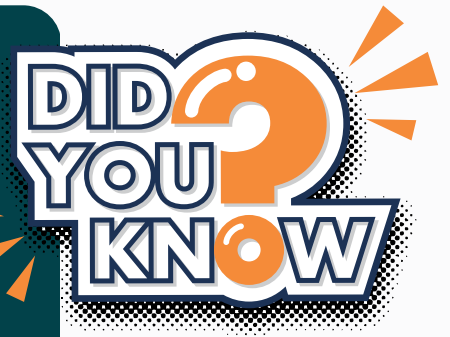


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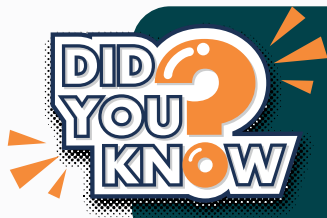
Medi-Cal

Regional Center Services

CALIFORNIA IS THE ONLY STATE THAT HAS REGIONAL CENTERS TO HELP PROVIDE SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY THAT ORIGINATED BEFORE AGE OF 18 YEARS -- INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY, CEREBRAL PALSY, EPILEPSY, AUTISM, AND OTHER CONDITIONS CLOSELY RELATED TO, OR THAT REQUIRE TREATMENT SIMILAR TO AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY.



What Can Early Start Services at Regional Center Do? (0-35 months)



EARLY START SERVICES IN CALIFORNIA CAN PROVIDE CRUCIAL EARLY INTERVENTION FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS (BIRTH TO 36 MONTHS) WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS OR AT RISK OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, INCLUDING AUTISM.

To qualify for Early Start services, the child must have:

- Have a developmental delay of at least 25% in one or more areas of either cognitive, receptive communication, expressive communication, social or emotional, adaptive, or physical and motor development, including vision and hearing; or
- Have an established risk condition of known cause, with a high likelihood of delayed development or
- Are likely to have a developmental delay due to a number of risks that have been confirmed by a professional or
- At-risk or high-risk conditions may include children who: Were born very early (less than 32 weeks gestation) and had very low birth weight
- Had extensive health problems or had long hospitalizations
- Had a prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol
- Experienced significant birth injury
- Experienced neglect or abuse



[Inland Regional Center Online Application for both Early Start](#)



How Can Early Start Help?

Inland Regional Center Early Start can typically offer the following:

- **Home-based early intervention services.** An interventionist visits your home weekly to work on cognitive and social development, usually through play. This model also offers family training and support.
- **Centered-based services** are offered in a small group setting for children with special needs to teach the child gross motor, fine motor, language, critical thinking, and social-emotional regulation skills.
- **A virtual parenting class model** that meets for 1- 5 hours a week focuses on empowering parents by providing them with the tools and strategies needed to support their child’s development. Parents receive one-on-one coaching from a clinician who helps them implement these strategies at home using research-based principles of ABA, which are translated into parent-friendly language and applied within the family context.
- **Applied Behavior Analysis.** It’s a scientific approach that focuses on understanding and improving behaviors. The main idea is to use positive reinforcement to encourage desired behaviors and reduce behaviors that might be challenging. This service is more intensive and can range from 10-40 hours a week. This can

“Payor of Last Resort”

The “payor of last resort” policy for regional centers means that these centers will only fund services if no other entity is responsible for doing so. Essentially, regional centers are required to exhaust all other possible sources of funding before they will pay for services. This includes private insurance, state or federal programs like Medicaid, and community resources.

For example, if a service is available through your private insurance or a public school system, the regional center will not cover it. They step in only when no other funding source is available.



What Can Regional Center Do for Children Over 3 yrs?

California is the only state that has Regional Centers to help provide services for many children and adults with developmental disability that originated before age of 18 years. These disabilities include intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, Autism, and other similar conditions. To qualify for Regional Center services, the disability must be expected to continue indefinitely and significantly limit the person in three or more areas of daily life:

- self-care
- language
- learning
- mobility
- self-direction
- capacity for independent living
- economic self-sufficiency

NOTE: Not everyone with a medical diagnosis will qualify for this service.

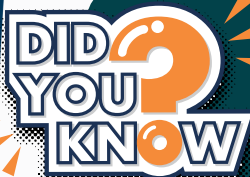
Regional centers also assist with ensuring clients can participate fully in their communities by providing services that support inclusion in:

- educational
- vocational
- recreational activities

Achieving greater independence through:

- skills training
- employment services
- and housing support

They work with families to create a personalized plan that meets their child's unique needs.



MAKING AN INFORMED DECISION ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT IS IMPORTANT. THE AUTISM SOCIETY INLAND EMPIRE SUPPORTS FAMILIES IN MAKING THE DECISIONS THAT FIT BEST FOR THEIR CHILD AND FAMILY.

How Do I Apply For Regional Center Services?

Inland Regional Center Online Application for Lanterman Services (over 36 months)



1

Apply online inlandrc.org/eligibility/ or using the QR code to apply for Early Start or Lanterman Services through Inland Regional Center if you have concerns regarding your child's development. A caseworker will be assigned to schedule an intake and assessments as needed.

2

As part of the intake process, regional centers conducts an interview to obtain information regarding your concerns, family history, and medical history; a battery of assessments could be considered to discover your child's current developmental level and needs.

3

The outcomes of the information collected could help create goals related to cognitive development, physical skills, communications abilities, social-emotional function, and adaptive behaviors. Early intervention services include but are not limited to speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, special instruction, assistive technology, and family training.

4

Information regarding frequency, intensity, location, and duration of early intervention services are written in the IFSP along with the goals that were agreed upon. The IFSP is reviewed and updated regularly to reflect the child's progress, family priorities, and changing needs. The document serves as a roadmap for guiding early intervention services and supporting a child's development in their family and community.



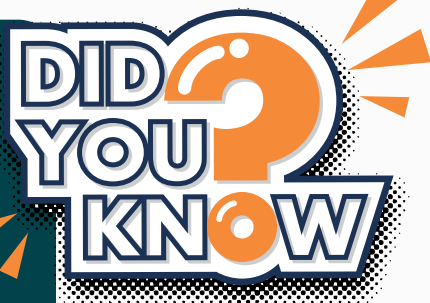


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Medi-Cal

School District

A NATIONAL LAW CALLED THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA) AND CALIFORNIA LAWS PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH AUTISM. THESE LAWS ENSURE THAT CHILDREN RECEIVE A FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION (FAPE) TAILORED TO THEIR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS.



[Disability Rights CA](#)
[Special Education Resources](#)





How Can School Districts Help?

Special Education Services: IDEA and California Education Laws work together to provide comprehensive support and ensure that children with disabilities receive the education and services they need to succeed in school. Special education does not mean your child has to go into a specific classroom; it is a comprehensive approach to providing individualized support and services to students with disabilities whether they are in general education classroom or a specialized classroom.

Key Protections Under IDEA and California Laws:

- **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** Every child with a disability is entitled to an education that meets their unique needs at no cost to the parents.
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** A customized education plan developed by a team of educators, specialists, and parents to address the child's specific needs.
- **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** Children with disabilities should be educated with their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible.
- **Parental Involvement:** Parents have the right to be involved in all decisions regarding their child's education and to access their child's educational records.
- **Procedural Safeguards:** Protections to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are upheld, including the right to dispute resolutions and due process hearings.
- **Related Services:** Children have the right to receive necessary services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and other supports that help them benefit from their education.
- **Transportation:** If needed, transportation services must be provided to ensure the child can attend school and receive their educational services.



Understanding the
504 Plan for Children
with Autism

504 Plans: These plans can be used for students who may not need as many services for their education. The plan can provide specific accommodations to support their learning needs. These might include extra time for tests, special seating arrangements, use of visual aids. The goal is to ensure the student has equal access to education and can succeed alongside their peers. To qualify for a 504 plan, a student must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.





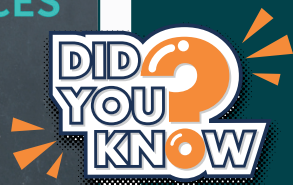
School District Evaluations

In California, a child with Autism can qualify for special education services through a specific evaluation process starting at age three.

Evaluation: The school district conducts a comprehensive assessment to determine if the child has Autism. This includes evaluating how the child’s developmental disability affects verbal and nonverbal communication, social interaction, and educational performance.

Educational Definition: It’s important to note that the child must meet the educational definition of autism, not just the medical definition. This means the disability must impact their ability to learn and participate in school.

IEP Team Decision: An Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, which includes educators, specialists, and parents, will review the evaluation results and determine if the child qualifies for special education services.



SCHOOL DISTRICTS CAN NOT MEDICALLY DIAGNOSE CHILDREN. DISTRICTS EVALUATE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION ELIGIBILITY.



[Autism Society Inland Empire Tips & Resources for a Successful IEP Meeting](#)

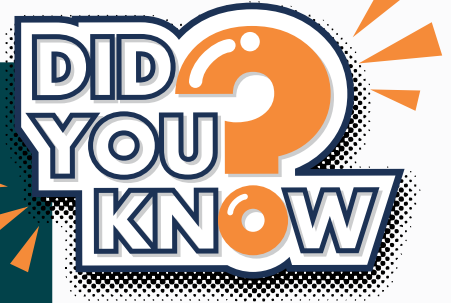




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Financial Assistance

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT THAT MAY HELP FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN WITH AUTISM INCLUDING SOCIAL SECURITY, IHSS, THE ABLE ACT AND GRANTS.



Is There Financial Assistance?

Although there is no simple answer to this question, in essence, the answer is yes. Raising a child with developmental disabilities is more expensive than raising a neurotypical child. Having a child on the Autism Spectrum can cost an additional \$17,000 to \$21,000 more each year than a child without disabilities, according to studies. Several related expenses include therapy, medical care, and specialized education.

Furthermore, indirect costs impact families when parents have to work fewer hours or quit their jobs to care for their children. Long-term planning is necessary to ensure ongoing care and support into adulthood, often requiring financial planning/assistance. It is possible that the Social Security Administration and In-Home Supportive Services entities can provide some financial assistance to help families; however, their policies and procedures on eligibility criteria are subject to change.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Financial assistance is provided to low-income families with disabled children through SSI. These benefits are usually made available to children from birth to age 18. The Social Security system uses its own rubrics for assessing developmental deficits and requires medical documentation to support your claim. The Department defines disability for children under the age of 18 as --there is medical evidence of physical or mental impairment that limits the child's ability to function, and the impairment is expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months.

After you apply and submit the required paperwork, the Social Security Administration will send you a letter stating whether your disability claim has been Accepted or Denied. You may request a Hearing should you disagree with their findings. It is not uncommon for families to be denied the first time they apply.

TO APPLY THEIR
ONLINE APPLICATION
BY SCANNING THE QR
CODE OR CALL 1-800-
772-1213



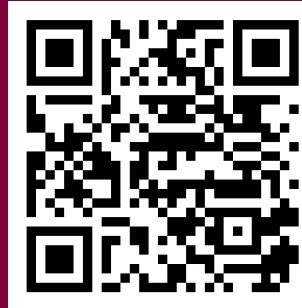
In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)

APPLY:

The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program is a county run program which may pay for services provided to low-income elderly, blind or disabled individuals, including children, so that they can remain safely in their own home. IHSS is considered an alternative to out-of-home care, such as nursing homes or board and care facilities. Some of the services that can be authorized through IHSS include: housecleaning, meal preparation, laundry, grocery shopping, personal care services (such as bowel and bladder care, bathing, grooming and paramedical services), accompaniment to medical appointments, and protective supervision for the mentally impaired.

Protective supervision is an IHSS service for people who, due to a mental impairment or mental illness, need to be observed 24 hours per day to protect them from injuries, hazards or accidents. An IHSS provider may be paid to observe and monitor a disabled child or adult when the person can remain safely at home if 24 hour supervision is provided. Protective supervision services can be difficult to obtain and will require clear documentation of the need for the service.

Riverside County



[IHSS Riverside County:](#)
Apply by phone (888) 960-4477
Online application

San Bernardino County



[IHSS San Bernardino County:](#)
Apply by phone (877)-800-4544
More info



The ABLE Act (Achieving A Better Life Experience Act)

To apply or more info
<https://calable.ca.gov/>



In 2014, The ABLE Act was passed which amends Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986 to create tax-free savings accounts for individuals with disabilities. In California, it is called CalABLE.

CalABLE is a savings and investment program designed to help people with disabilities save money without losing their eligibility for public benefits like Medicaid and SSI. To open an account, the person must have a disability that started before age 26. You can open an account online with a minimum deposit of \$25, and then add as little as \$1 at a time. You can save up to \$18,000 per year in your CalABLE account, with options to keep the money in cash or invest it in various portfolios.

The funds can be used for a wide range of disability-related expenses, such as education, housing, transportation, and health care. The money in a CalABLE account grows tax-free, and withdrawals for qualified expenses are also tax-free. Importantly, having a CalABLE account allows you to save money without affecting your eligibility for public benefits. It's a great way for individuals with disabilities to save for their future needs while still receiving the support they need.

Grants

Numerous organizations offer grants to help cover costs related to therapy, medical care, and other needs.



For more information
IEAutism.org/Grants

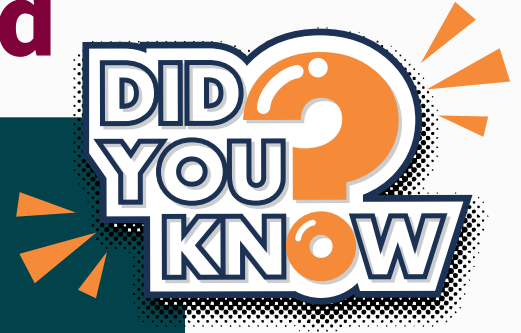




STARTING
STRONG
UNDERSTANDING SERVICES
FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Medi-Cal

Getting Connected



STUDIES SHOW PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM WHO PARTICIPATE IN SUPPORT GROUPS REPORT SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER LEVELS OF STRESS AND HIGHER LEVELS OF WELL-BEING.





Getting Connected

PLAYGROUPS AND FUN SOCIAL EVENTS

Finding playgroups and safe social events for your young child with Autism can be incredibly beneficial. These activities provide a structured environment where your child can practice social skills, make friends, and learn through play. They also offer a chance for you to connect with other parents who understand your experiences, providing valuable support and advice. Specialized playgroups are designed to be inclusive and accommodating, ensuring your child feels comfortable and confident. These events are a fun way for your child to explore, communicate, and enjoy new experiences in a safe setting.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Attending a support group can be incredibly helpful for families who have just received an Autism diagnosis for their child. These groups provide a safe space to connect with other parents who understand what you're going through. You can share experiences, get practical advice, and find emotional support. It's a great way to feel less alone and more empowered as you navigate this new journey. Plus, you'll learn about resources and strategies that can make a big difference for your child and your family.

WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES AND WEBINARS

Attending workshops, conferences, and webinars about Autism can be incredibly valuable for parents. These events provide up-to-date information and practical strategies to help you support your child. You'll learn from experts and connect with other parents who share similar experiences. This can help you feel more confident and empowered in your parenting journey. Plus, you'll discover new resources and tools that can make a big difference in your child's development and well-being.

Many webinars are offered free of charge. Conferences tend to cost more. If you are a Regional Center client, Regional Center can pay for or reimburse these costs up to \$1200 per year. You must contact your caseworker for approval before the conference.

[Autism Society Inland Empire Community Resource Listing of Social Groups](#)



[Autism Society Inland Empire Community Resource Listing of Support Groups](#)



[Sign Up for Our Free Newsletter to Get the Latest on Workshops, Conferences and Webinars](#)





STARTING
STRONG
UNDERSTANDING SERVICES
FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Intro to Advocating

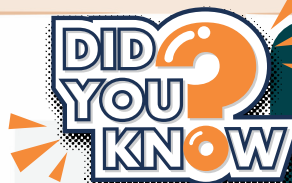


ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD IS
ESSENTIAL BECAUSE YOU ARE THEIR
STRONGEST VOICE AND ALLY.



Effective Advocacy

Advocating for your child is crucial because you are their strongest voice and ally. You are an equal member of any planning team, and your advocacy can ensure your child receives the necessary support and services to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Whether it is the healthcare system, Early Start, Regional Centers, etc, these are made up of good people with large caseloads, often doing their best but may have other priorities. You are the only one with your child's best interest as their only priority.



IF YOU NEED HELP WE HAVE A TEAM OF INFO & REFERRAL SPECIALISTS WITH YEARS OF EXPERIENCE NAVIGATING DIFFERENT SYSTEMS AND AGENCIES. THEY ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP EMPOWER YOU LEARN THE INS AND OUTS OF NAVIGATION.



IEAutism.org
info@IEAutism.org
951.220.6922

Contact Us





Tips for Effective Advocacy

1. **Practice assertive advocacy.** Aggressive advocacy involves using forceful, demanding, and often confrontational tactics to achieve goals, leading to intimidation and a lack of respect for others' perspectives. Assertive advocates express their needs and desires while also considering and valuing the viewpoints of others. This balanced approach fosters positive relationships, mutual respect, and more sustainable, cooperative solutions.
2. **Prepare in advance.** Familiarize yourself with your child's IEP, including their goals, accommodations, and services. Note any concerns or questions you may have to address during the meeting.
3. **Purchase a binder with dividers.** Think of it as your go-to resource for keeping everything organized. Having all your child's important documents, like medical records, therapy notes, and educational plans, in one place will save time and reduce stress.
4. **Educate yourself.** Knowledge is empowering and can help you make informed decisions about your child's care. Learn the laws and regulations in the systems and more about your child's disability. Many reputable websites, support groups, books, and organizations are dedicated to providing accurate information about Autism and advocacy.
5. **It is highly recommended that you communicate with an agency in writing.** E-mails and paper trails help ensure that reasonable timelines are being met. Emails and written notes also help everyone stay on track and meet important deadlines.
6. **If English is not your first language, we encourage you to write in your native language.** I just wanted to let you know that regional centers and school districts have translators available if you need clarification.
7. **Be an active participant.** Take an active role in the meeting. Clearly express your concerns, observations, and goals for your child's education. Share any relevant information or updates about your child's progress or challenges.
8. **If there was an issue, send a follow-up email or letter summarizing the discussed points, agreements, and any outstanding concerns (if not reflected in the IEP document).** This provides a written record of the meeting and ensures everyone is on the same page. If you do not sign, new services and goals will not start; your child's previous IEP (if you already have one) must stay in effect.





STARTING
STRONG
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FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM



Notes

COULD MY CHILD HAVE AUTISM OR A
DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY?

SYSTEMS

- What Are the Different Systems & Agencies
- Diagnosis Vs Assessment
- Medical Diagnosis & Therapies
- Regional Centers Services
- School District
- Financial Assistance
- Getting Connected



 info@IEAutism.org
 951.220.6922

Your local Autism connection

Questions? Contact us.

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**Autism
Society**
Inland Empire



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