



Starting Points for EI Service Coordinators Autism Spectrum Disorders

INFORMATION *This list is not meant to be all inclusive.*

What are Specialty Services? Specialty Services are provided to children enrolled in EI programs who have been identified as requiring specialized services due to a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), vision loss, deaf or hard of hearing, have complex medical needs or multiple disabilities.

Children with specialty service conditions, including those who have a diagnosis of ASD, require specialized care and services that may not be appropriately, adequately, or specifically provided within the existing EI system. A clinician with special skills or knowledge may be needed to supplement the child's program.

Who are the Specialty Service Providers (SSP) for children diagnosed with ASD? In the EI system, there are SSP agencies that have been approved by the Department of Public Health (DPH) to provide Intensive Behavioral Intervention services. Each SSP has been assigned to a specific catchment area(s); the EIPs have the option to contract with the SSPs in their designated areas.

REASONS FOR REFERRAL

Children enrolled in EI programs who receive a diagnosis of ASD are eligible for Specialty Services. This is an established condition – the child is eligible until his/her 3rd birthday.

The diagnosis must be obtained from one of the following professionals, who frequently conduct such evaluations with an interdisciplinary clinical team that specializes in assessing young children at risk for ASD:

- A physician
- A licensed psychologist

The diagnostic letter should include a statement that identifies the need for intensive services.

Written evidence of the diagnosis shall be maintained in the clinical record by the community EI program and will be shared with the SSP.

FIRST STEPS

1. Obtain and review the diagnostician's report. Tools administered to confirm the diagnosis of ASD may include but are not limited to Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS), Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS), and American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5) which provides standardized criteria to help diagnose ASD. Developmental assessments may be administered as well to further support the diagnosis.
2. Early Intervention requires a letter conferring a diagnosis of ASD to initiate services. If the child's diagnostic report does not specify assessment tools used and detail results, suggest that the family may want to pursue a comprehensive evaluation at a diagnostic clinic or with a clinician specializing in this field. Lack of a full report will not hinder the start of services in EI, but may be a requirement of some insurers or school systems and needed in the future.
3. Be sure to note recommendations for additional medical assessments. These might include audiological assessments, ophthalmological evaluations, genetic testing, etc. Help the family connect (through the child's primary care practitioner) to appropriate sources for those assessments and support them to access appropriate services when indicated.
4. Speak with your EI Program Director to determine which SSP agencies your EIP contracts with.
5. SSP Referral to IFSP services is a multi-step process, requiring specific action steps by the family, EI service coordinator and SSP. As timely service is a priority, the service coordinator must be aware of the process to avoid delays. The service coordinator has a pivotal role to facilitate smooth communication, coordination, and oversight of the service delivery process. Keep the following in mind as this process moves forward:
 - a. Inform family of SSP options and provide unbiased information about service delivery models to support the family's decision making.

- b. Determine your program's protocol for sharing information, both billing/insurance information and clinical information, between the SSP and the EI program. Identify key individuals and share contact information. The sharing of insurance information is critical in this process – ask your program director what you need to know.
 - c. The service coordinator is the individual responsible for ensuring the coordination and implementation of the IFSP. *(See the: EI Autism Specialty Services Process guidance document)*
 - d. Facilitate the process by monitoring various action steps at the beginning of IFSP services and for the duration of the child's enrollment in EI.
6. Collaboration between the EI program and SSP is enhanced by clear and frequent communication, co-visits with EI professionals (**not limited**), sharing of developmental and functional assessment information, group brainstorming, IFSP meetings, and working as a team with the family.
 7. Help families find out if services are covered under ARICA (An Act Relative to Insurance Coverage for Autism) Autism Insurance Resource Center - <https://amicovered.disabilityinfo.org/> or call 800-642-0249
 8. There is a great deal of misleading information on the internet. Direct the family to reliable media resources and support – listed below.

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH ASD

National: Autism Speaks www.autismspeaks.org

Autism Society of America www.autism-society.org

CDC Learn the Signs. Act Early <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>

Autism Navigator – web based tools for providers and families www.autismnavigator.com

Autism Web – informational website run by parents <http://www.autismweb.com/>

Interactive Autism Network –Autism research https://www.iancommunity.org/cs/newly_diagnosed

State: Autism Resource Centers MA <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dmr/awp/awp-support-centers-2017.pdf>

Massachusetts Act Early www.massactearly.org

Exceptional Lives <http://exceptionallives.org/>

Federation For Children With Special Needs www.fcsn.org

Massachusetts Family TIES www.massfamilyties.org

EI Parent Leadership Project 877-353-4757 or www.eiplp.org

MA Families Organizing for Change 877-353-4757 www.mfofc.org

OTHER RESOURCES

Determine eligibility for entitlements, based on family's financial situation.

Call the Department of Public Health, Division for Children & Youth with Special Health Needs **Community Support Line** at 1-800-882-1435 for information on these resources and public benefits *(This is a great place to start if you aren't sure about a family's eligibility for other public benefit programs or services)*

- ❑ **Mass Health/CommonHealth** (*buy-in program of Mass Health for children with disabilities*)
- ❑ **Kaleigh Mulligan** (*home care for children whose severe health care needs require care equivalent to a hospital or nursing facility*)
- ❑ **Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund** (*financial reimbursement for families who have extraordinary out-of-pocket expenses relating to their child's special health care needs*) www.mass.gov/cicrf
- ❑ **Community Case Management** (*approval for in home nursing for medically fragile children on Mass Health*) 1-800-863-6068
- ❑ **SSI** (*Social Security benefits for children with disabilities with limited financial resources*) 1-800-772-1213 www.ssa.gov/pubs/10026.html
- ❑ **WIC** (*nutrition program that provides free nutrition and health education, healthy food and other services to families who qualify*). To **apply call 1-800-WIC-1007 or the WIC program in your community.**
- ❑ **SNAP** (*Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*) to help low-income households buy food <http://www.mass.gov/snap>