



Accessing Medical and Therapeutic Services

- Evaluations and services are available when there are concerns about a child's early development. Through the Early Intervention Program, parents can request assessments and services for their child between the ages of birth and thirty-six months. Children found eligible for Early Intervention will receive an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) which sets goals to help children learn the basic skills that typically develop during the first three years of life. Early intervention is authorized and available in every state and territory of the United States through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center website (<http://ectacenter.org/contact/ptccoord.asp>) lists each state's Early Intervention contact information.
- After the age of three, children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other disabilities can access services through the school system. IDEA ensures that a child with a disability is offered a free appropriate public education (FAPE) which provides special education and related services to meet his or her specific needs. Contact the local school district representative who coordinates these special services for more information about evaluations and services.
- Therapeutic services are available for all children with autism and other disabilities. Access to these services is not income based. Approach your healthcare provider and school district for evaluations to determine the services the child needs. If it is determined the child needs specific therapies and/or supports, these should then be prescribed by the physician or included within the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP.) Therapies received in school are focused on educational goals. Those therapies received in a clinical setting can support educational goals, but are meant to treat the child therapeutically.
- Develop positive relationships with local agencies, physicians, therapists, and advocacy organizations. Having a network of reliable resources can help to navigate through the complex system of care and education and connect you with the services needed for the child. Because the child's needs will change as he or she ages, it is important to expand relationships with healthcare and educational service providers who are skilled in needs of that age group.
- Laws and services vary by state. Contact the local library or search the internet for state-specific information about medical and educational services and regulations in your state. Ask the child's school or agency case manager for a written document which specifies your child's legal rights.
- Ask questions and listen to healthcare providers, teachers, therapists, administrators, insurance representatives, organizational leaders, and other parents. Listen carefully to determine and understand what is available and possible for the child. Services that may not be available in one area, may be accessible through an alternate method.

