

Family Education Sheet

What you can do while you're waiting for your child's visit with the Autism Spectrum Center



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It can be challenging to wait for your child to be seen in the Autism Spectrum Center. Below are some resources you can use before your child is seen for an autism evaluation.

Early Intervention

Early Intervention (EI) in Massachusetts is a program available for children ages birth to 3 years old who show signs of a developmental delay or are at risk for developing a delay. These family-centered services are provided to help children progress in their development and to help a family meet the needs of their child. Your child doesn't need to have a specific diagnosis. If you aren't already involved with Early Intervention, visit Family TIES of Massachusetts to find your local agency. You don't need a referral from your child's pediatrician, and you can call yourself to see if your child is eligible for these services.

Family TIES of Massachusetts

<https://www.massfamilyties.org/>

1-800-905-8437 (TIES)

Support is available in several languages when you call

Public School

If you're concerned about your child's development and they are nearing the age of 3 (or are older than 3), contact your local school department. Tell the early childhood coordinator, or special education coordinator, that your child is waiting to be evaluated for Autism Spectrum Disorder and you want to request an evaluation to begin the special education process. They will walk you through the next steps. If you're having a hard time getting the school involved, you may need to send a letter requesting their help.

For more information on the special education process in Massachusetts, check out "A Parent's Guide to Special Education" (available in 3 languages):

A Parent's Guide to Special Education

English: <https://fcsn.org/a-parents-guide-to-special-education-english/>

Spanish: <https://fcsn.org/a-parents-guide-to-special-education-spanish/>

Portuguese: <https://fcsn.org/a-parents-guide-to-special-education-portuguese/>

For more information on Early Childhood Special Education in Massachusetts, visit the Department of Education.

Department of Education: Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/ecse/>

You can choose a different language and the website will be translated automatically. Not all documents on the site are translated into every language.

Outpatient services

You can access insurance-based outpatient services for certain therapies without needing an autism diagnosis. These services can happen in addition to any services your child gets through school. Ask your child's pediatrician which services may be helpful. Some examples are speech therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy.

- **Speech therapy** can focus on a child's communication skills, feeding skills or social skills. If your child is facing challenges communicating their wants and needs, understanding what you're asking them to do or socializing with other children, speech therapists might be able to help. If feeding is a concern, you will have to find a speech therapist who is trained and able to address feeding and swallowing needs.
- **Occupational therapy** can focus on your child's independence skills (such as getting dressed or feeding themselves), sensory needs or self-soothing skills. An occupational therapist is trained to help you find the best combination of activities throughout the day to address concerns, such as over-stimulation, helping your child understand their emotions and better express how they are feeling.
- **Physical therapy** can focus on a child's physical movements ("gross motor") and promote safe ways to participate in community and play activities. If you're worried about how your child moves in their environment, or if they have trouble with their movements, talk with a physical therapist to see if PT is appropriate.

For any of these outpatient services, talk with your child's pediatrician or contact your health insurance provider for a list of agencies that accept your insurance plan.

Before you visit a specialist, make notes of your observations of your child and their development. What is concerning you? When did these concerns first start? What are you seeing? Taking a short video can help show what you're seeing. These notes can help you during the appointment and help the specialist understand your concerns.

For more information on Autism Spectrum Disorder and other resources, explore these links:

CDC Act Early

English:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>

Spanish:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/spanish/actearly/index.html>

*Some resources are available in other languages including Korean, Vietnamese and Haitian Creole

CDC What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

English:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html>

Spanish:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/Spanish/autism/facts.html>

CDC's Milestone Tracker App

English:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones-app.html>

Spanish:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/spanish/actearly/spanish-milestones-app.html>

*Available in English and Spanish for free on iOS and Android

CDC's What to Do While You Wait to See a Developmental Specialist

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/concerned-whileyouwait.html>

Zero to Three

Resources and articles on common topics for children ages 0-3. Topics include play, sleep and emotional development.

<https://www.zerotothree.org/>

Spanish:

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources?type=espanol>

Parents Helping Parents

<https://www.parentshelpingparents.org/stressline>

Parent Stress Line: 1-800-632-8188

Federation for Children with Special Needs (Massachusetts)

<https://fcsn.org/>

Family Resource Centers

<https://www.frcma.org/>

Contact us

Questions? Contact the Autism Spectrum Center at 617-355-7493 or email

autismcenter@childrens.harvard.edu.