

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

# Ages Birth - 5

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## Guide and What You Need to Know

**Connecticut's Division of Autism Spectrum Disorder**

5/18/2023

A quick reference checklist and guide for parents and/or caretakers of a child with Autism.

**Connecticut's Division of  
Autism Spectrum Disorder  
Services**



## Ages Birth-5

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## Early Intervention

### CT Birth to Three System

The [Connecticut Birth to Three System](#) is a state program operating under the requirements of Part C of the federal “Individuals with Disabilities Act”. Its mission is to strengthen the capacity of families to meet the developmental and health-related needs of their infants and toddlers who have delays or disabilities.

All children in Connecticut up to age 3 who have significant delays in development, or certain medical conditions that can cause delays, are eligible for services.

The team from the early intervention program will work with your family and your doctor in choosing the kinds of support and interventions that can best help you help your child.

Services are provided in places that are natural for your child, including your home, child care setting, and other places where your child usually spends time, so that these new ways of teaching your child become part of your family’s daily routine.

Anyone who is concerned about a child’s development may call Child Development Infoline toll free at 1-800-505-7000 (TDD accessible) to make a referral, including parents, guardians, health professionals and child care providers. If someone other than the child’s parent or guardian makes the call, the parents will be contacted for their permission to proceed further.

*SOURCE:* UWC 211 website eLibrary

### Explore Child Care and Preschool Options

Referrals, counseling, and information about licensed day care centers and family day care homes, nursery schools, school age programs, summer camps, and in-home services. Also, 2-1-1 Child Care website posts the availability survey, fee reports, information on how to become a licensed family day care provider, and a searchable child care database. Anyone may call the 2-1-1 Child Care at 1-800-505-1000 or by visiting <https://www.211childcare.org/>

*SOURCE:* UWC 211 website

### Prepare to Transition from CT Birth to Three System to the Local School System

Moving from program to program is called transition. Support from Birth to Three ends when your child turns age 3. He or she may “transition” to preschool special education offered by your local school

district. It is essential that families, Birth to Three service providers, and school district personnel walk through this transition process together.

To ensure that the process is smooth and that services are in place no later than your child's third birthday, it is essential that families, Birth to Three service providers, and school district personnel walk through this transition process together, one step at a time.

**To plan ahead:**

***Your family can:***

- Begin to discuss what types of programs or services you would like for your child and family after Birth to Three services end
- Talk about transition with your service coordinator
- Give written permission to your Birth to Three program to notify your school district about your child at least six months before your child turns three. If you prefer, you may contact your school district yourself by phone or letter at any time. Starting the process early offers the best opportunity for a smooth transition.

***Birth to Three Staff will:***

- Provide your family with information about transition
- Begin the process by developing the transition plan section of the IFSP and identifying outcomes with your family
- Assist you in referring your child to your local school district for an eligibility evaluation
- Schedule a transition planning meeting with your family and the school district staff up to six months, but at least 90 days before your child's third birthday.

***School District staff will:***

- Work with your family and the Birth to Three staff on transition planning
  - Introduce your family to the school district's planning and placement team members and school staff
  - Describe the process for determining whether your child is eligible for preschool special education.
- Transitioning out of Birth to Three

**What is a transition meeting?**

With your permission, Birth to Three staff will convene a meeting to discuss services your child may receive after you and your child leave the Birth to Three program. For children who may be eligible for preschool special education, the meeting will include your family, Birth to Three staff and preschool special education staff. This meeting will take place at least 90 days before your child's third birthday. At the meeting, the transition plan section of the IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) will be completed. The plan will outline the steps that your family, your Birth to Three program staff and school district staff will take to address the end of Birth to Three services and the transition to new programs, services and people.

**Some questions to ask at the Transition Meeting:**

- How will the school district decide if my child is eligible for special education?
- What kind of testing will be needed?
- Who can we call if we have questions?

**At the Transition Meeting:**

***Your family can:***

- Share your hopes for your child
- Participate in the transition process at the level that feels comfortable to you
- Ask questions about anything that is unclear

***Birth to Three staff will:***

- Share information about your child's progress in the Birth to Three program
- Participate in transition planning
- Help write a transition plan with specific steps for transition
- Help you identify additional community resources and supports

***School District staff will:***

- Participate in the transition planning process
- Explain your child's and your rights as a parent
- discuss eligibility for preschool special education and determine whether additional evaluation information is needed
- If your child is determined eligible, discuss the options for providing the special education services needed by your child. If additional information is needed in order to determine your child's eligibility, the school district planning and placement team will describe the kind of testing that will be done. It may be formal or informal. Some of the information may be gathered in natural, play-like situations. Other tests may require specific activities. Your permission will be required for this testing.

The following link is to the Family Handbooks page which provides Transition information. Please visit <https://www.birth23.org/files/Families/FamilyHandbookII.pdf>

Information about preschool contacts and the contact person for scheduling a Transition conference in each town, please visit <https://www.birth23.org/towns/>

Here you can also find the following supports/services by town:

- Can find Child Early Intervention Supports
- Agencies specializing in Autism Services
- Agencies specializing in Deaf/ HoH

*SOURCE: Connecticut Birth to Three Website*

## Health and Medical Care, and Related Therapeutic Interventions

### Understand the Current Diagnostic Criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder

The DSM-5 is now the standard reference that healthcare providers use to diagnose mental and behavioral conditions. Understand the current diagnostic criteria for ASD by visiting Autism Speaks website at <https://www.autismspeaks.org/dsm-5-criteria>

### Review “Connecticut’s Guidelines for a Clinical Diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorder”

Read into depth information related to Autism Spectrum Disorder, the diagnostic evaluation, evaluation results, early intervention and special education. Visit <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DPH/CYSHCN/Connecticut-Guidelines-for-a-Clinical-Diagnosis-of-Autism-Spectrum-Disorder.pdf>

### Learn about Evidenced-based Practices and Therapies

The EBP is an intervention and instructional practices or programs having scientific evidence that shows that they are effective. To know more please visit the Organization For Autism Research website at <https://researchautism.org/use-of-evidence-based-practices/>.

Select an evidence-based practice to access a module about the practice at <https://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/evidence-based-practices>

### Explore Behavioral Supports if Necessary

#### **Autism Speaks**

People with Autism may display behaviors that are challenging to understand or manage. Autism Speaks offers *The Challenging Behaviors Tool Kit* which provides strategies and resources to address challenging behaviors and help support you during difficult times. To download a FREE toolkit, visit <https://www.autismspeaks.org/tool-kit/challenging-behaviors-tool-kit>

#### **Behavioral Health Services through Medicaid**

**Carelon Behavioral Health (formerly Beacon Health Options)** is the Administrative Service Organization for the State Plan ASD services. They are responsible for reviewing documentation to support level of care guidelines and medical necessity to authorize ASD services for Medicaid (HUSKY A, C and D) members under the age of 21. \*\*\*Husky B members are **not** eligible for State Plan ASD services. Carelon Behavioral Health also provides Care Coordination and Peer Specialist Services for individuals with ASD.

If approved for Husky, individuals can contact **Carelon Behavioral Health** to obtain a listing of providers that accept Husky insurance and offer behavioral health services. Carelon can be reached at 1-877-552-



8247 or visit <http://www.huskyhealthct.org/members.html> to search for a listing of doctors/providers. A unique feature of the program is the support of Carelon's Peer Specialists, all of whom have lived experience with ASD, and Care Coordinators. They offer the necessary tools and services to ensure families are connected to effective resources in their community by:

- Helping members and their families understand what benefits are available to them through their Medicaid coverage
- Assessing the needs of the member and their family
- Helping families navigate the health care system
- Coordinating nontraditional services
- Creating and updating a local area resource database

## Develop a System to Organize Your Paperwork

Raising a child with Autism has its rewards and has its challenges. To assist parents with the overwhelming amount of paperwork your child may have, *Pathfinders for Autism* developed a template you can use to help organize all that paperwork <http://pathfindersforautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/A-Guide-to-Organizing-Your-Paperwork.pdf>

## Assistive Technology

### Learn about Assistive Technology Devices and Adaptations

Assistive technologies can be used to support and enhance communication for people with autism with or without speech impairments. **Autism Speaks** offers an **Assistive Technology for Communication Roadmap** to help individuals learn how to start using assistive technologies for communication <https://www.autismspeaks.org/worksheet/assistive-technology-communication-roadmap> or call the Autism Response Team at 1-888-288-4762.

**NEAT Marketplace** (New England Assistive Technology Center)- Provides information, assistive technology assessments, instruction and demonstration of the latest adaptive equipment <http://www.neatmarketplace.org/>

**Assistive Technology Corner at State Education Resource Center (SERC)**- Displays of low, mid and high tech AT devices Contact them at 860-632-1485 x4 or <mailto:libraryhelp@ctserc.org>

**Connecticut Assistive Technology Guidelines**- Guidelines for considering, implementing, and evaluating assistive technologies from low- to high-tech <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Publications/Assistive-Technology-Resource-Guide/Overview>

### Explore Financial Assistance for Assistive Technology

**Autism Care Today**- Provides financial assistance for services that the person would otherwise not be able to afford. Areas of support include but are not limited to: ABA Therapy, Assistive Technology,

Medical Testing & Treatments, Speech and Occupational Therapy, Safety Equipment, Summer and Social Programs, and Quality of Life Supports <http://www.act-today.org/our-funds/autism-care-today/>

**FODAC (Friends of disabled adults & children)**- FODAC assists adults and children with disabilities in need of wheelchairs, other medical equipment, vehicle adaptations, assistive technologies, refurbished computers, and equipment repair. Visit <https://fodac.org/>

**Jaden's Voice**- Provides funding to families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder. Our assistance supports a family's immediate expenses related to the well-being of the family member diagnosed with autism on a case-by-case basis. Examples include: effective treatments, assessments, adults who are actively looking for employment or need additional supports, graduate minority students specializing in autism in the areas of speech, behavior or occupational therapy, parent groups, etc. <http://jadensvoice.org/jadens-voice-cares-grant-program/>

**Medic Alert Foundation**- Autism Medical IDS & 24/7 wandering support services <https://www.medicalert.org/autism-importance-of-autism-wandering-support-services> or 1.800.432.5378

**National Autism Association**- Provide Communication devices to individuals with autism who are non-verbal or minimally verbal, and whose communication challenges put them at increased risk of injury or harm <https://nationalautismassociation.org/family-support/programs/naas-give-a-voice-program/>

**Organization for Autism Research**- provides a tool kit and assist with fundraising for services needed. 1-866-366-9710

**Pervis Jackson Jr Autism Foundation**- Pervis Jackson Jr Autism Foundation helps needy parents of children with disabilities to get respite or other support services. Grants can be used for Camp Sessions, Respite of Parent's Choice, Cleaning Help, Cooking Help, Spa Day, Urgent Bills, Other Parent Needs. <http://www.pjraf.com/>

**The Disabled Children's Relief Fund**- DCRF grants for assistive devices, equipment, rehabilitative services, and for innovative arts and humanitarian services. The online application is available between April and September. For more information, visit [Disabled Children's Relief Fund - National Organization for Rare Disorders \(rarediseases.org\)](http://www.rarediseases.org/)

## Education

### Learn About the Special Education Process and IEP's

People with autism have a number of legal rights and protections. It is important to understand these rights to ensure that you or your child is being treated fairly and given access to all of the services and supports to which you are entitled. For more information, visit *Autism Speaks* website <https://www.autismspeaks.org/your-childs-rights>. Here you will get a quick overview of your child's rights for public information, what is free and appropriate public education, early intervention services, how to get services started, rights to assistive technologies, and more.

## Review Connecticut’s State Department of Education “A Parent Guide to Special Education in CT”

This publication, from the CT State Department of Education, provides a clear explanation of the laws, regulations and policies affecting special education programs and services [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Special-Education/Parents\\_Guide\\_SE.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Special-Education/Parents_Guide_SE.pdf)

## Prepare to Transition from CT Birth to Three System to the Local School System

Refer to pages 4

## Explore Child Care and Preschool Options

Refer to page 4

## Understand Your Child’s Educational Needs

The document that spells out your child’s needs and how these needs will be met is the Individualized Education program (IEP). To know more about the IEP, the IEP meeting, teacher/staff requirements, goals and objectives, visit the *Autism Society* website at <https://autismsociety.org/resources/education/>

You can also review “*A Parent Guide to Special Education in CT*” which is a publication from the CT State Department of Education. It provides a clear explanation of the laws, regulations and policies affecting special education programs and services. Within the publication is information on IEP’s [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Special-Education/Parents\\_Guide\\_SE.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Special-Education/Parents_Guide_SE.pdf)

Read “*Educational Options for Children with Autism*” by Verywell Health. Provides information about Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), mainstreaming and autism, inclusion and autism, support in the classroom, public, private, and home school options <https://www.verywellhealth.com/educational-options-for-children-with-autism-260393>

## Develop Positive Behavioral Interventional Plans

If your child exhibits behaviors that impede learning for themselves and others, you can incorporate a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) into your child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP). For more information visit the Car Autism Roadmap website at <https://www.research.chop.edu/car-autism-roadmap/behavior-intervention-plan>

Did you know any use of restraint is to be documented in the child’s educational record and, if needed, in the child’s school health record?

The Connecticut State Department of Education has published ‘Understanding the Laws and Regulations Governing the use of Restraint and Seclusion in Schools: July 2018’, which provides an in-depth look at definitions, Connecticut statutes, and regulations schools follow when restraining or putting a child into seclusion. Visit <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Special->

[Education/Understanding the Laws and Regulations Governing the Use of Restraint and Seclusion in Schools.pdf](#)

*Inclusion Evolution* provides information on providing your child's school with a "No Consent" letter for restraint and seclusion. As part of positive behavioral plan, you can request this letter be included in your child's official records <https://www.inclusionevolution.com/child-needs-no-consent-letter-restraint-seclusion/>

## Get involved in your local Special Education Parent Organizations (SEPTO)

Be part of your school districts Special Education Parent Teacher Organization (SEPTO). These organizations typically focus on the needs and issues encountered by special education students and parents/guardians. For more information, call your local school district.

## Contact your local Family Support Network

**Connecticut Family Support Network (CTFSN)** is a parent-to-parent organization offering support groups, training, email distribution list, information and advocacy. For more information or to get the contact information to your regional Family Support Coordinator, visit [www.ctfsn.org](http://www.ctfsn.org)

## Develop a System to Organize Education Records

Having a child with special educational needs will generate loads of documents. Knowing what to save, throw away or make a priority is challenging. Visit the **Wrightslaw** website and find tips on how to organize your child's special education documents by visiting <https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/organize.file.htm>

## Help Your Child Learn About Appropriate Social Skills

**Autism Speaks** offers literature on social skills and autism. Within the reading you will find tips to personalize a template to teach your children of appropriate social skills in various settings such as going to a restaurant, going to the store, handling bullying, potty training, and much more. Visit <https://www.autismspeaks.org/social-skills-and-autism>

Other professionals that support social skills include:

- occupational therapists
- behavioral therapists
- school psychologists
- general education teachers
- health and PE teachers
- many other direct care staff

Other opportunities that support social skills include:

- picnics
- play dates
- play groups
- online social platforms
- recreational activities
- virtual support groups
- volunteer activities
- therapy
- sensory friendly events

**Raisingchildren.net.au**- This website provides information about ASD and teaching parents how to teach children social skills through role-play and video-modelling. Visit <https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/communicating-relationships/connecting/social-skills-for-children-with-asd#strategies-for-developing-social-skills-nav-title>

## Engage in Recreational and Leisure Activities that your Child and Family Enjoy

Leisure activities are an important part of life for everyone. Finding fun and enjoyable activities for an autistic child may be more challenging due to difficulties in behavior, social interaction and communication. Visit **Autism Awareness Centre Inc.** and read “Developing Leisure Activities for Individuals with ASD” to learn about leisure activities <https://autismawarenesscentre.com/developing-leisure-activities-for-individuals-with-asd/>

**Autism Speaks** provides information about the benefits of recreation and provides answers to frequently asked questions. Visit <https://www.autismspeaks.org/recreation-0>

- **Autism Families of Connecticut in Newington**
  - Recreational and Social activities for youth and adults. There may be a small fee per class/event. To learn more, visit <http://www.autismfamiliesct.org/about/>
- **Autism Services and Resources Connecticut in Wallingford**
  - Offers a variety of social and recreational activities throughout the year, in person and virtually. Must register with Sara Taussik first. In-Person events may take place at different regions throughout the state to give individuals from different regions opportunities to participate. To learn more visit <https://ct-asrc.org/>
- **Connecticut Family Support Network (CTFSN) in Glastonbury**
  - Maintains a Camp and Recreation Database of agencies offering recreational activities and those serving as family destinations for individuals with disabilities. To learn more visit <https://ctfsn.org/>
- **Museums for All**
  - is an initiative of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Through Museums for all, individuals with SNAP benefits can gain free or reduced admission to museums by simply presenting their EBT Cards and a photo ID. You can use the website search engine to find a participating museum in CT by visiting <https://museums4all.org/>.

## Safety

### Teach your Child about the ‘Uh-Oh’ feeling and “Tricky People”

For a long time, the ‘Stranger Danger’ concept taught children all strangers were potential dangers. Nowadays, studies show most abductions occur from someone the child knows. According to David Finkelhor (2013), “But children taken by strangers or slight acquaintances represent only one-hundredth of 1 percent of all missing children. The last comprehensive study estimated that the number was 115 in a year.”

*SOURCE:* Finkelhor, D, (2013, May). *Five myths about missing children*. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-missing-children/2013/05/10/efee398c-b8b4-11e2-aa9e-a02b765ff0ea\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.acc67eafd044](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-missing-children/2013/05/10/efee398c-b8b4-11e2-aa9e-a02b765ff0ea_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.acc67eafd044)

Another article you can use to teach children about the ‘Uh-Oh’ Feeling and trusting their intuition <https://www.kidpower.org/library/article/the-uh-oh-feeling/>

‘**Tricky people**’ teaches children that a tricky person can be someone known or unknown to the child and does something that breaks a safety rule or asks you to do something that makes the child feel uncomfortable <https://www.kidspot.com.au/health/family-health/safety/the-tricky-people-lesson-you-need-to-teach-your-kids/news-story/36dd4010c5f49a893948561e493f02fc>

To learn more about teaching stranger safety to children with ASD, visit Autism <http://blog.stageslearning.com/blog/teaching-autism-stranger-safety>

### Discuss What is Appropriate Talk and Touch

Learning about bodies and body parts can help your child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) understand and feel comfortable with her body. It also lays the groundwork for teaching your child about personal boundaries and safety, including good and bad touch <https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/development/physical-development/bodies-boundaries>

Parents and children can also view the following short clip video titled ‘*Safe Touch/Unsafe Touch*’ at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNTUMNKSNowk>

### Address Wandering and Elopement

Wandering and Elopement is all too common among children with Autism. This puts families under a high level of stress and puts children with Autism at high risk of harm. Becoming familiar with these behaviors, planning and implementing safety strategies can prevent a preventable tragedy.

**Autism Speaks** offers wandering prevention, preparedness and response tips for families with a child with Autism. Visit <https://www.autismspeaks.org/wandering-prevention-resources>

**Pathfinders for Autism** provide literature, tips, and guides related to wandering and elopement. Visit <https://pathfindersforautism.org/resources/safety/wandering-and-elopement/>

## Be Aware of Potential Household Dangers

Safety in the home environment for children in general is a major concern for parents and caregivers, let alone if a child in the home has Autism.

The **Organization for Autism Research** provides a guide composed from parents, first responders, educators, and community members, who shared their strategies and resources to address safety threats that commonly arise during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. This autism safety resource will educate parents about how to prevent and mitigate emergency events, safety threats that may affect their child in the future, and how to teach safety habits that will build a foundation for safety in adulthood <https://researchautism.org/resources/a-guide-to-safety/>

## Practice Street Safety

The **Organization for Autism Research** provides a guide composed from parents, first responders, educators, and community members, who shared their strategies and resources to address safety threats that commonly arise during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. This autism safety resource will educate parents about how to prevent and mitigate emergency events, safety threats that may affect their child in the future, and how to teach safety habits that will build a foundation for safety in adulthood <https://researchautism.org/resources/a-guide-to-safety/>

## Enroll your Child in Swimming Lessons if Possible

The **Organization for Autism Research** provides a guide composed from parents, first responders, educators, and community members, who shared their strategies and resources to address safety threats that commonly arise during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. This autism safety resource will educate parents about how to prevent and mitigate emergency events, safety threats that may affect their child in the future, and how to teach safety habits that will build a foundation for safety in adulthood <https://researchautism.org/resources/a-guide-to-safety/>

**United Way of CT 211 Infoline**- maintains a comprehensive database of supports and services throughout the state, including locations that offer Swimming Classes. Just call 2-1-1, toll free 1-800-203-1234, or visit [2-1-1 Connecticut \(211ct.org\)](http://211ct.org)

### Other Suggestions:

- Special needs swimming in Connecticut
- Contact a local YMCA
- Contact your local parks and recs department

## Establish a Safety Network (including first responders) in Case of an Emergency

The **Organization for Autism Research** provides a guide composed from parents, first responders, educators, and community members, who shared their strategies and resources to address safety threats that commonly arise during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. This autism safety resource will educate parents about how to prevent and mitigate emergency events, safety threats that may affect their child in the future, and how to teach safety habits that will build a foundation for safety in adulthood <https://researchautism.org/resources/a-guide-to-safety/>

**Autism Speaks** provides tips and a guide for safety within the community including safety planning, getting around, asking for help, using public rest rooms, interacting with law enforcement, and more just to name a few <https://www.autismspeaks.org/safety-community>

## Familiarize Yourself with Community Play Spaces and Their Boundaries as well as their Proximity to Possible Dangers (i.e. roads, ponds, river, pools)

The **Organization for Autism Research** provides a guide composed from parents, first responders, educators, and community members, who shared their strategies and resources to address safety threats that commonly arise during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. This autism safety resource will educate parents about how to prevent and mitigate emergency events, safety threats that may affect their child in the future, and how to teach safety habits that will build a foundation for safety in adulthood <https://researchautism.org/resources/a-guide-to-safety/>

**Connecticut Family Support Network (CTFSN)** provides a listing of summer camps, recreation programs, and family destinations for children with special needs <https://ctfsn.org/>

### Other Suggestions:

- Contact your local parks and recs departments to inquire about bodies of water, pools and parks in the area, for example

## Funding for Services and Legal Issues

### Apply to the Department of Social Services Division of Autism Spectrum Services

- Visit [www.ct.gov/dss](http://www.ct.gov/dss)
- Click on 'Programs and Services'
- Click on 'Autism Spectrum Disorder-ASD'
- Select the 'Eligibility' tab
- Towards the bottom of page, select **Please follow this link for the eligibility application.** Application is available in **Spanish**



## Determine if Your Child is Eligible for Social Security Benefits

The Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability programs are the largest of several Federal programs that provide assistance to people with disabilities. Social Security Disability Insurance pays benefits to individuals who have work long enough and paid Social Security taxes while Supplemental Security Income pays benefits based on disability status and financial need.

You can apply online at <https://www.ssa.gov/>. Once you finish the online process, a Social Security representative will contact you for any additional information needed for the application. You can also call 1-877-405-4874.

## Explore Insurance Coverage for Autism Services

**Autism Speaks** Initiative provides answers to frequently asked questions about Connecticut's Autism Insurance Reform Law and what you need to know <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DSS/Health-and-Home-Care/Autism-Spectrum-Disorder/Connecticut-Autism-Insurance-Law.pdf>

**Carelon Behavioral Health** (1-877-552-8247) manages the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) benefits for Medicaid beneficiaries who have Husky A, C, and D and are under age 21. A feature of the program provides access to a Carelon Peer Specialist and Care Coordinators to assist with explaining benefits covered under Medicaid, helping families navigate the health care system, and coordinating non-traditional services <https://www.ctbhp.com/autism-spectrum-disorder-asd/>

## Direct Questions Regarding ASD Insurance Issues to the Office of the Healthcare Advocate

**Office of the Healthcare Advocate** (1-866-466-4446) Provides assistance with selecting health insurance coverage. Agency will answer questions about health insurance issues, including, but not limited to, enrollment/eligibility issues, clarification of plan benefits, plan benefit limitations, and out-of-network services [www.ct.gov/oha](http://www.ct.gov/oha)

## Learn about Life Planning Tools

### ABLE Accounts

- Funds within an able account may be used for qualified disability expenses (QDEs), which can assist the beneficiary with expenses that can include things like education, training, expenses related to improve health, and their independence (life skills coaching, job coaching, for example).
- ABLE accounts allow individuals with disabilities to save money and use the funds for qualified disability expenses while remaining eligible for state and federal benefits programs, which many have asset tests.

- The total annual amount of contributions by individuals, including family members, is \$17,000 per year. The maximum amount someone can have within an ABLE account without benefits being affected is \$100,000 in any given year. To learn more about CT's ABLE Accounts visit <https://savewithable.com/ct/home.html>

### **Special Needs Trust**

- Allows a person with a disability to have additional assets and still qualify for benefits.
- Permits a family member to leave an inheritance to a person with a disability without disrupting entitlements.
- Provides funds for supplementary services (i.e. clothing, home visits, phone service etc.).
- Creates protection against creditors.
- Assures family members that they or their relative with a disability will continue to live a dignified life.

Individuals with Special Needs Trusts can use the funds to:

- Supplement state and federal benefits
- Help maintain self-sufficiency
- Purchase services and items or pay bills
- Enhance quality of life

For more information, contact PLAN of CT at 860-523-4951 or visit <https://www.planofct.org/>

### **Explore Tax Deductions and Exemptions for Children with Special Needs**

**Special Needs Alliance-** Article titled “**Tax Tips for Parents of a Child with Special Needs**”

<https://www.specialneedsalliance.org/the-voice/tax-tips-for-parents-of-a-child-with-special-needs/>

**Talk About Curing Autism (TACA)-** provides information regarding tax advantages and deductions for parents of children with special needs <https://tacanow.org/family-resources/tax-strategies-for-parents-of-kids-with-special-needs/>

### **Develop a System to Organize Financial and Legal Records**

**Pathfinders for Autism-** offers a guide to organizing your paperwork

<http://pathfindersforautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/A-Guide-to-Organizing-Your-Paperwork.pdf>

**Wrightslaw-** You need a simple, foolproof document management system. In this article, you will learn how to organize your child's file. After you organize the information about your child into a file, you will have a clearer understanding of your child's disability and needs

<https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/organize.file.htm>

## Support

### Network with Others at Support Groups

**Connecticut Family Support Network (CTFSN)** - Parent-to-parent organization offering support groups, training, email list distribution, information and advocacy [www.ctfsn.org](http://www.ctfsn.org)

**Autism Services and Resources Connecticut (ASRC)**- Provides advocacy and support groups, recreational and social opportunities, trainings, newsletter, and information [www.ct-asrc.org](http://www.ct-asrc.org)

For a more comprehensive listing of information related to *Support Groups*, please contact the DSS Autism Unit and speak with an Autism Support and Resource Specialist by calling Nathaniel Calixto at 860-424-5677 or visit the DSS Autism website <https://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Health-And-Home-Care/Autism-Spectrum-Disorder---ASD/Autism-Spectrum-Disorder---ASD>

### Identify your Support System

**Autism Speaks** – Offers tips and guidance to parents and caregivers related to identifying and/or creating a support system after a child has been diagnosed with Autism  
<https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-and-your-family>

**Raisingchildren.net.au**- provides some ideas for building supportive relationships with your extended family and friends <https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/communicating-relationships/family-relationships/family-friends-asd>

For a comprehensive listing of information related to *Support Groups*, please contact the DSS Autism Unit and speak with an Autism Support and Resource Specialist by calling 860-424-5677 or visit the DSS Autism website at:

- Visit [www.ct.gov/dss](http://www.ct.gov/dss)
- Click on 'Programs and Services'
- Click on 'Autism Spectrum Disorder-ASD'
- Select the 'Related Resources' tab > select 'Search by Topic' > select 'Support Network and Groups' tab > select the 'Support Networks for Youth and Peers' or 'Support Networks for Adults' document

### Explore Day Care Options

Refer to page 4

### Take Care of Yourself, your Spouse and your other Children

**Synapse**- website offers self-care tips to parents of parents with an autistic child <http://www.autism-help.org/family-autism-self-care-strategies.htm>

**Autism Resources and Community (ARC)**- website offers parents an article on self-care  
<http://blog.stageslearning.com/blog/autism-parents-self-care>

## Advocacy

### Learn how to Advocate for your Child

**Connecticut Family Support Network (CTFSN)** - Parent-to-parent organization offering support groups, training, email list serve, information and advocacy [www.ctfsn.org](http://www.ctfsn.org)

**Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC)** - Provides information and support to families of children with disabilities from birth to 26 years [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org)

**Autism Services and Resources Connecticut (ASRC)**- Provides advocacy and support groups, recreational and social opportunities, trainings, newsletter, and information [www.ct-asrc.org](http://www.ct-asrc.org)

**Office of the Healthcare Advocate (OHA)** - Provides free advocacy and assistance to resolve healthcare and insurance issues 1-866-466-4446 [www.ct.gov/oha](http://www.ct.gov/oha)

**Family Advocacy Program (FAVOR)**- Offers training, technical assistance and, support to parents and caregivers [www.favor-ct.org](http://www.favor-ct.org)

**Center for Children’s Advocacy** [www.kidscounsel.org](http://www.kidscounsel.org)

**CT Families for Effective Autism Treatment (CT FEAT)** - Provides information, training, support and networking. It has a “Parents Only” internet discussion list. [www.ctfeat.org](http://www.ctfeat.org)

**Autism Families CONNECTicut** - An organization formed by a group of parents and family members that provides recreational, cultural and social activities for children with ASD. [www.autismfamiliesct.org](http://www.autismfamiliesct.org)

**PATH Parent to Parent and Family Voices of CT**- A network of families providing informational and emotional support to others who have a child with developmental or health related needs.  
[www.pathct.org](http://www.pathct.org)

**Wrightslaw**- Provides advocacy, legal information, support [www.wrightslaw.com](http://www.wrightslaw.com)

**Your Special Education Rights**- Video based resource for parents to provide them with the knowledge to advocate for their child’s education [www.yourspecialeducationrights.com](http://www.yourspecialeducationrights.com)

**CT Network for Legal Aid (Special Education)** - Free legal help for people with low income  
<http://ctlawhelp.org/special-education-in-connecticut>

**Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut**- Advocacy, legal representation, advice, and information for all education related issues for people with low income [www.slscct.org](http://www.slscct.org)

**Connecticut Legal Services-** Provides legal representation for people with low income. Priority area include: divorce, child support and other aspects of family law, housing subsidies, all aspects of public benefits ( SNAP, Medicaid, SSI etc.), special educations, employment related issues <https://ctlegal.org/>

## Additional Resources

For a more comprehensive listing of information related to Autism Spectrum Disorder, please contact the DSS Autism Unit and speak with an Autism Support Resource Specialist:

Nathaniel Calixto  
Autism Support and Resource Specialist  
[Nathaniel.Calixto@ct.gov](mailto:Nathaniel.Calixto@ct.gov)  
Tel: 860-424-5677  
Fax: 860-920-3170

\*\*\*Please note: The contents of this document are provided solely for informational purposes. It is meant to give individuals with ASD and their families a choice regarding services and supports. The DSS Autism Division does not specifically recommend or endorse any individual provider or practitioner.