



AUTISM NEW DIAGNOSIS

Whether expected, or unexpected, a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can still bring a range of emotions and many questions. *It is normal to wonder "where do I start?"*



WHAT SHOULD I DO FIRST?

- After your child has been given the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder it is important to go over their diagnostic report. This report will include specific recommendations for your child such as therapies, school based services, additional testing and/or other community supports.
- The *100 Day Kit* found on the Autism Speaks website can help you make the best use of the 100 days following the diagnosis:
 - www.autismspeaks.org
- It is important to keep track of information, including names of agencies and individuals providing services, school meetings, communications, and evaluation reports. This will help in getting questions answered and being able to provide information that is needed to specialists/providers. Consider using a 3-ring binder or setting up files to keep important information and reports from your child's providers.
- Give copies of your child's diagnostic evaluation to your child's PCP, school, and agencies providing services.
- The Behavioral Health Team at CHA can assist you with resources and referrals as needed.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Becoming a strong advocate for your child takes time. Keep informed, ask questions, and take advantage of the services and support available to you, your child, and family.

The following Community Resources may be very helpful:

- Autism Resource Central
- Autism Speaks
- Insurance Resource Center for Autism and Behavioral Health
 - AIRC@umassmed.edu
- Department of Disability Services (DDS)
- This info and more can be found to the right under resources.

EARLY INTERVENTION

If your child is age *birth to three* and you have not already been receiving services, you should contact Early Intervention (EI) who can provide speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy and support for other developmental issues. Your PCP will have a list of local EI programs for your use.

RESOURCES

AUTISM RESOURCE CENTRAL

- Connect with your local center by visiting mass.gov or if living in the Central-West Region, that encompasses Worcester and its surrounding communities visit:
 - www.autismresourcecentral.org
- Offers a Autism 101 workshops for newly diagnosed patients and families.
- [508-835-4278](tel:508-835-4278)

AUTISM SPEAKS

- Provides advocacy, services, supports, research and innovation, and advances in care for autistic individuals and their families.
- www.autismspeaks.org

INSURANCE RESOURCE CENTER FOR AUTISM & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

- Free resource for those with questions regarding insurance coverage.
- www.massairc.org
- (774) 455-4056
- Email: AIRC@umassmed.edu

DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITY SERVICES

- DDS provides supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities including Autism Spectrum Disorder to enhance opportunities to become fully engaged members of their community.
- www.mass.gov/orgs/departments-of-developmental-services



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TEAM

Here at CHA we have our own specialized team of Behavioral Health staff who are available to provide consultation and/or referrals for mild to moderate emotional and behavioral challenges. They can assist with clinical assessment treatment recommendations, individual and family support, information and resources related to education, behavioral and developmental needs. Please contact the office at **(508) 556-5840** to be connected with our BH team!

ABA THERAPY

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a therapy based on the science of learning and behavior. The goal is to increase behaviors that are helpful and decrease those that could be harmful or impact learning. ABA is a tailored treatment to meet the needs of each child and teaches skills useful in everyday life. Please speak with your pediatrician or contact the Behavioral Health Staff for a list of local ABA Providers.

SCHOOL SERVICES

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

An IEP is a plan or program developed by the parent, student, and educational professionals of the district to ensure that a child with an identified disability receives specialized instruction and related services to meet their needs. The purpose of this is to promote student success in their education with the proper supports in place. Your child's support will be based on their ability to access the academic curriculum

If your child does not already have an IEP in place, please contact your public school to request an evaluation.

If your child does already have an IEP, you can share their diagnosis, request a meeting to address accommodations or service changes, and discuss any different options that may be available.

IEP Resources

Scholastic - Step-By-Step guide to the IEP Process
www.scholastic.com/parents/school-success/school-life/gifted-special-needs/step-step-guide-to-iep-process.html

A Parents Guide to Special Education in Massachusetts
www.doe.mass.edu/rlo/sped/parents-guide/index.html#/

TAKING CARE OF YOU

You'll receive a great deal of information. It is easy to become overwhelmed, as you learn about autism current research and resources. You will also be accessing services to meet your child's needs, communicating regularly with your child's providers and advocating.

Keep in mind it is important to take care of yourself!

Don't push your feelings away as you will likely experience many conflicting emotions. Talk about them. Take time to find ways to recharge and relax when possible.

Know you are not alone - consider joining a support group in your area to help you connect with other parents, find resources and help in your efforts to advocate for your child.

Appreciate the small victories your child may achieve - celebrate the wins no matter how big or small.

The Behavioral Health Team at CHA can assist you with services and resources you may need.

RESOURCES

MASSACHUSETTS PARENTAL STRESS HOT LINE

- Free, confidential, 24/7 help that offers support, empathy, encouragement, information and referrals.
- www.parentshelpingparents.org
- (800) 632-8188

MASSACHUSETTS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH HELP LINE

- Free, confidential, service to connect you directly to clinical help, when and where you need it.
- www.masshelpline.com
- (800) 632-8188

PARENT PROFESSIONAL ADVOCACY LEAGUE

- Advocates for mental health services for children, youth and their families. PPAL's goals are to support families, nurture parent leaders and work for systems change.
- www.ppal.net
- (800) 632-8188

Contact Us

BH Team : (508) 556-5840

508-832-9691
508-842-1500
childhealthassociates.net