

STARTING POINTS FOR SERVICE COORDINATORS FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

This list is not meant to be all inclusive. Consider additions appropriate for the particular child and family you are serving.

1. Provide the family with information about the Specialty Service system for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in the packet “Information for Parents of Children Newly Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders.” Review this with the parents, highlighting the programs that serve their geographic area. Families have the option of meeting the various providers in their geographic area and may be interested in meeting those who provide different educational approaches to addressing ASD.
 - Families who have a child diagnosed with ASD can contact Specialty Service Programs themselves. If they would like the EI Service Coordinator to refer them to Specialty Services, fill out the Referral Form (in the packet and attached) and send it to the appropriate SSP agencies.
 - If your EI Program has developed in-house services for children on the spectrum that may be useful for families who are unwilling to enroll in Specialty Services or are waiting for intensive services to begin, be sure families are aware of this option

Note: Families are encouraged to work with one Specialty Service Provider to reduce potential confusion for the child as instruction styles can be quite different. This is especially important at the beginning of intensive services. Families are encouraged to make decisions about which provider to use based upon their child's characteristics and the provider's ability to meet the child's needs, not on the basis of which provider is available first. Do not encourage a family to consider enrolling in a second Specialty Service Program just to increase the number of hours the child receives. Such requests may be considered when a child's performance indicates an additional approach is warranted and should not be considered until the child is receiving services from the initial SSP for at least eight weeks. The secondary SSP is responsible for processing the request with DPH.

2. Encourage the family to connect with the Autism Support Center in your area. They can request the “packet for newly diagnosed families” and to be on the newsletter mailing list. The current list of Autism Support Centers is attached.

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

- MassHealth/CommonHealth
- Kaleigh Mulligan
- Catastrophic Illness
- SSI
- WIC
- Food Stamps

4. Check to see if the family is interested in:

- opportunity to talk with other parents of children with ASD (Refer to Family Ties: 1-800-905-TIES or 1-800-905-8437) or www.massfamilyties.org
- Interest in developing advocacy and leadership skills (Refer to Parent Leadership Project (877-353-4757))
- Other sources of information about ASD: internet, books, videos

5. Obtain and review the diagnostician's report. Be sure to note any recommendations for additional medical assessments. These might include audiological assessments, ophthalmological evaluations, genetic workups, 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.

6. When a child is enrolled with a Specialty Service Provider, invite SSP staff to participate in ongoing assessments of the child, either by being part of the IFSP team's evaluation or by providing supplemental assessment information from the SSP staff.

7. Consider the need for early referral to the LEA to ensure a smooth transition at the time of the child's third birthday.

Be sure that the family has information about the DMR Autism Division.