

Helpline FAQ

We've compiled a guide to our most frequently asked questions to navigate for immediate information and referrals.



As every experience and situation is unique, and many services and supports vary greatly by community and state offerings, further guidance may be necessary.

We greatly encourage you to reach out to your [local Autism Society affiliate](#) for state or community based guidance and referrals, or contact the National Helpline for more specialized support.

What does the Autism Society's National Helpline do, and how can it help me?

The National Helpline at the Autism Society of America is an information and referral line with dedicated information and referral (I&R) specialists who can provide referrals, discuss options, and share materials and tools, by email, [our website](#), and through our toll-free number, [1-800-328-8476](#). We are trained to provide the best resources available to meet your needs. The Helpline is not a crisis line, and does not provide direct services but can offer support, and discuss practical next-steps.

My child or loved one was recently diagnosed with Autism? What now?

When your loved one is [diagnosed with Autism](#), the family begins an unexpected journey. Families reaching out to the Helpline have shared that there is an overwhelming amount of information to navigate for care, interventions, and educational services, joined by feelings of isolation and worry.

Our I&R specialists can help you answer these questions by identifying possible providers for interventions, services and supports. We can then provide supporting information to help decipher next steps, and share resources for state-based supports, starting with your local [Autism Society affiliate](#) and [Parent Training and Information Center \(PTI\)](#).

What evidence-based therapies and interventions should I consider?

There are a wide array of services, interventions, therapies and programs that are designed to support and strengthen an individual to live fully. To the maximum extent possible, [informed decisions](#) should be made by the individual with Autism and their family members in partnership with a multidisciplinary team, and may include multiple interventions. This plan should be shared with everyone who supports and interacts with your child so the interventions can be reinforced. [General areas of interventions](#) include behavioral therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy. If you believe the therapy should be covered by insurance or Medicaid, you may want to begin by contacting them to see which providers are covered.

- [Behavioral Therapy](#) typically refers to a set of interventions that aim to reduce or eliminate harmful, and/or self-defeating behaviors, and replace them with healthy, adaptive behaviors.
- [Occupational Therapy](#) works to improve everyday skills to allow people to become more independent and participate in a wide range of activities. It is typically executed through play skills, learning strategies, and self-care.
- [Speech Therapy](#) addresses challenges with language and communication, and works to improve verbal, nonverbal, and social communication skills.

How do I pay for the support myself or my loved one needs?

Financial difficulty is one of the biggest stressors that families with special needs children face. The primary funding source for a child's services is mandated through a United States federal law, the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to children with disabilities. For children under 5, [visit your state's early intervention website](#) to determine how to access services.

Your family's medical insurance may reimburse you for Autism services, such as speech therapy or behavioral health treatment. Start by speaking with your human resources department, and inquire about insurance reimbursement for Autism services.

There are also benefits and programs that can be applied for in your state or county that may cover some or all of the costs of therapies or interventions. That may mean [Medicaid Waivers](#) or [Social Security](#), or [the state's insurance program for children](#).

I don't think my child is getting the support they need at school, what can I do?

An **IEP (individualized Education Program)** is a plan that should include goals, benchmarks, the least restrictive environment, assistive technologies needed, and a description of the special education services a child should receive. An IEP is covered under the federal law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which guarantees a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for every student with a disability. An I & R specialist can share resources, learning opportunities, toolkits, and educational advocacy organizations that can help ensure your child is receiving the best possible education. It is always ideal for parents to remain on friendly and cooperative terms with the school administering their child's IEP. But if the school or district continually falls short, there are administrative and [legal options](#), including mediation and due process.

I am in high school - or my child is in high school - what happens next?

A **transition plan** is a process that prepares students for adult life after they leave high school. The transition plan is based on the student's individual needs, strengths, skills and interests. Transition services and plans should be initiated when a child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team, and updated annually. The goal would be to create a solid plan that aligns with the child's vision of their future and fosters independence.

As an adult I have been diagnosed with Autism, what help is there for me?

It is not uncommon to receive a diagnosis as an adult. Through greater awareness, more recognition and understanding of Autism in women and underserved populations, and a general increase in Autism acceptance, many adults are self-diagnosing or seeking a formal assessment. There are a variety of ways someone can get support; Some people may experience a mix of emotions with an Autism diagnosis, and seeking understanding and acceptance can be supported through mental health options like therapy and support groups. Connecting with other Autistic adults to discuss shared and diverse experiences, socialization opportunities, and skill-building can be a valuable support system.

The following links were referenced throughout the FAQ document and will be helpful in guiding your next steps.

[AutismSociety.org](https://www.autismsociety.org)
[AutismSociety.org/resources-by-topic](https://www.autismsociety.org/resources-by-topic)
[AutismSociety.org/contact-us/#affiliate-list](https://www.autismsociety.org/contact-us/#affiliate-list)
[AutismSociety.org/who-we-are/#making-informed-decisions](https://www.autismsociety.org/who-we-are/#making-informed-decisions)
[Autismsociety.org/resources/intervention-and-therapies](https://www.autismsociety.org/resources/intervention-and-therapies)
[Medicaid.gov/state-overviews/index.html](https://www.medicicaid.gov/state-overviews/index.html)
<https://bit.ly/ssa-link>

Email info@autism-society.org
or call **800-3-AUTISM** (800-328-8476) to connect with the National Helpline

Parent Training and Information Center (PTI):
www.ParentCenterHub.org