






DC AUTISM PARENTS

— Where Parents Empower Parents —

Medical Diagnosis vs. Educational Classification of Autism

Medical Diagnosis	Educational Classification
 Takes place in a healthcare setting	Takes place in a school setting 
<p>The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM) is used to make the diagnosis.</p> <p><u>DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria</u></p>	<p>The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) identifies autism as a disability and determines eligibility for special education services.</p> <p><u>IDEA Federal Regulation</u></p>
<p>Does not always lead to eligibility for early intervention/special education services</p>	<p><u>State Definition</u> (included in the OSSE Disability Worksheet)</p>
<p>Can be helpful to make sure a child has additional access to services through their health insurance plan</p>	<p>Can be helpful to make sure a child has access to needed supports in school</p>
<p>A medical provider may be able to recommend other therapies and services that are not a part of the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plan (IEP)</p>	

Where can I get my child evaluated for a medical diagnosis of autism?

You can call your insurance provider or ask your child's doctor to help you find a healthcare provider who can diagnose autism. Below is also a list of clinics that evaluate autism:

DC Metro Area:

Children's National Hospital: [Various Autism Clinics](#)

MedStar Georgetown University Hospital: [Autism and Communications Disorders Clinic](#)
202-444-2722

Baltimore Area:

[Center for Autism and Related Disorders](#) at Kennedy Krieger Institute
443-923-7630, option 2

[Autism Spectrum Center](#) at Mount Washington Pediatric Hospital
410-367-2222

How do I access Early Intervention/Educational Evaluations?

Your child's primary care provider may refer you or you can self-refer to Strong Start or Early Stages.

If your child is birth to 2 years, 10 months: Call the [Strong Start DC Early Intervention Program](#) Hotline at (202) 727-3665 or fill out the [referral form](#).

If your child is 2 years, 8 months to 5 years, 10 months: Call [Early Stages](#) at (202) 698-8037 or submit a [referral form](#).



Please note that the early intervention/special education evaluation process will only begin after a parent/guardian has provided written consent.

To learn more, check out the DCAP Video Series - [Medical Diagnosis vs. Educational Classification](#).

This fact sheet was prepared *in collaboration* with the DC Autism Collaborative.