

What To Do

While You Are Waiting for a Medical Diagnostic Evaluation for Autism



**DC AUTISM
COLLABORATIVE**

*DC-AC Education, Outreach, Engagement Subgroup
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Waitlists to receive a formal medical evaluation for autism are often long which can be frustrating. While a formal medical diagnosis of autism opens up a number of doors to receive certain types of intervention services through your insurance (for example applied behavior analysis[ABA]), there are a number of other steps you can take to support your child's development while you are waiting for this evaluation.

SEEK OUT EARLY INTERVENTION OR SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT:

- Contact your state's early childhood systems to request a free evaluation to see whether your child qualifies for intervention services. Families can call on their own and do-not need a referral from a medical professional. Here are some [tips](#) on what to say when you call.
- If your child is under 3, contact [Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia](#) to complete an evaluation and begin early intervention services.
- If your child is 3 or older, contact your county's Child Find program. Phone numbers can be found by searching Google for Child Find followed by the name of your county.

START SERVICES IN AREAS OF NEED:

- Your pediatrician can refer your child to specialists who can provide therapy services in different areas (speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy). Such services should be covered by your health insurance and do not require a formal diagnosis of autism to access them.

CONTINUE TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT:

- Other professionals can provide lots of support. Remember, YOU know your child best. The following free resources are for parents to use in supporting their child's development:
 - [Help is in Your Hands](#) is an online interactive resource for families with young kids with symptoms of or diagnosed with autism. It is a free website with 16 web-based video modules to help parents add simple methods to their everyday routines at home.
 - [Parent Encouragement Program \(PEP\)](#) offers online and in-person trainings to give parents the knowledge to understand the underlying causes of their children's behavior and the practical skills and tools they need to address problems right away. PEP programs are offered in English and Spanish and include videos-on-demand, webinars, virtual and in-person classes, and individual support.

- [Caregiver Skills Trainings](#) from Autism Speaks and the World Health Organization is a free online training program that teaches caregiver’s day-to-day skills to help boost the wellbeing and development of children ages 2-9 with autism and other developmental delays.
- [Positive Parenting Tips](#) through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) can help you learn about things to do to support your child’s development at different stages. You can also “make the most out of playtime” with these tips from the [CDC, Zero to Three](#), and [Vroom](#).
- Consider visual support tools such as [these](#), through Easter Seals Chicago, to help provide additional structure and support for your child at home.
- Continue to monitor your child’s development using the CDC’s free [“Learn the Signs. Act Early.”](#) materials.

PREPARE FOR A MEDICAL AUTISM EVALUATION:

- While you are waiting you can take the following steps to make the most out of your evaluation when the time comes.
- Learn more about autism through these [Autism Speaks](#) and [Autism Navigator](#) resources.
- Learn more about what to expect by reviewing the [“Elements of an Evaluation for Autism Spectrum Disorder”](#) document from the Center for Autism Research.
- Compile information about your child’s development including medical records or previous developmental or educational evaluations. Start to think about what your main concerns are for your child’s development as well as what are their strengths.
- Contact your insurance to find out what services they will or will not cover AND how much they cover if your child ends up receiving a diagnosis of autism.

