

# Family Guide to Autism Services Funded by Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare



Affordable health coverage. Quality care.



**Early and Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT)** is a benefit made available to all Medicaid-enrolled children under age 21 to ensure they receive appropriate preventive, dental, mental health, developmental, and specialty services. New Jersey has amended its Medicaid State Plan to adopt coverage of medically necessary autism services.

This resource offers parents, family members, and other caregivers of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) information about autism services available through Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare, the process for accessing them, answers to frequently asked questions, and resources to learn more and provide assistance.

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# How to Access Autism Services

## Eligibility

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Any Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare member (ages 0-21) with an autism diagnosis made by a Qualified Healthcare Professional (QHP).

A QHP is a healthcare provider with a license that allows them to assess and diagnose conditions like Autism Spectrum Disorder. QHPs generally includes physicians, psychologists and Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs).



## Access

2

Once a child is diagnosed, access to services is then based on the individual needs of the child. Specific services will be determined based on clinical evaluation and parental choice.

- **Enrolled with an MCO:** Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare members who are currently enrolled in a Managed Care Organization (MCO) should contact their MCO using the phone number on the back of their managed care identification card.
- **Not Yet Enrolled with an MCO:** Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare Members who are not yet enrolled in an MCO may wait until they are enrolled or, they can contact a provider and ask what managed care organizations they accept. This may assist you in selecting a MCO.

## Service Provision and Monitoring

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After a service is selected, a treatment plan will be developed based on the child's needs. This plan will be updated regularly. Providers work with the family and the Managed Care Organization's (MCO) care management unit to monitor the child's progress and the effectiveness of those services.



## Settings

4

Treatment may be provided anywhere in the community including the home.



# Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare Covered Services

The following autism services are currently available through Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare:

## Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

ABA is an individualized, skill-based, and positive approach to understanding and improving people's behavior and quality of life. ABA offers a wide variety of techniques to teach new skills (e.g., communication, social interaction, daily living skills), decrease challenging behavior through more functional communication, and help individuals use their new skills in different situations. In ABA treatment, a behavior analyst will break down complex skills into smaller parts and encourage an individual with autism to practice and combine those parts until they master the overall skill.

**Approved providers:** Board Certified Behavior Analysts and those under their supervision

## Allied Health (Occupational, Physical, Speech and Language)

Allied health services include Occupational Therapy (OT), Speech Therapy (ST) and Physical Therapy (PT) for the treatment of autism. Licensed Occupational, Physical or Speech Therapists work with individuals with autism to improve motor skills, reciprocal play skills, the frequency and quality of speech and overall communication skills to enhance daily living.

**Approved providers:** New Jersey licensed Physical and Occupational Therapists and Speech Language Pathologists (frequently called speech therapists)

## Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Communication methods and/or devices are used to supplement or replace speech or writing for individuals with ASD. The devices and therapies assist children who are having difficulty speaking or writing to communicate. Augmentative and alternative communication devices must be medically necessary and ordered by a physician or advanced practice nurse.

**Approved providers:** Speech Language Pathologists may provide therapy and recommend the appropriate equipment supplied by Durable Medical Equipment providers.

## Clinical Interventions

Privately practicing clinicians can provide additional behavioral and/or developmental therapies to assist children with autism. Assessments are completed to develop an integrated plan of care which is designed to provide parent coaching, education and parent/family/caregiver support.

**Approved providers:** Psychologists, psychiatrists or psychiatric mental health Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) or any licensed behavioral health clinician contracted with your managed care organization.

## Developmental and Relationship-based Approaches

Relationship based approaches are part of a broader category of developmental approaches designed to assist children with autism. Relationship based approaches focus on the importance of relationships. Several types of relationship based models exist including the Developmental, Individual-difference, Relationship-based (DIR) Floortime model. DIR Floortime is a child-led approach during which an adult follows a child's lead and focuses on objects of interest to the child. This service integrates psychodynamic and cognitive learning principles designed to address social engagement, social communication, and broadening the individual's interests.

**Approved providers:** Providers certified by the Greenspan Floortime Approach Credentialing Center, the Interdisciplinary Council on Development and Learning (ICDL), or Profectum. Other DIR approaches must be certified by a nationally recognized credentialing entity.

## Sensory Integration Therapy

Sensory integration therapy is intended to provide a child with help receiving and processing input from their senses. The therapy helps the child create an appropriate response to sight, sound, or touch information encountered in their environment. By exposing children to sensory stimulation in a structured, repetitive way, over time, the therapy may help the brain to adapt and allow the child to process and react to sensations more efficiently. These changes may expand the child's ability to complete activities of daily living and improve their quality of life.

**Approved providers:** Specially trained Occupational Therapist certified by a nationally recognized certification entity.

## Skill Acquisition and Capacity Building

In addition to services available through Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare, children diagnosed with autism who also have an intellectual/developmental disability (IDD), may also be eligible to receive skill acquisition and capacity building services. The Department of Children and Families will evaluate your child to determine if they are eligible for this type of intervention, and potentially other IDD services. These services will assist children in actively participating in social, school and work activities and strengthen their skills while building confidence. One can find out about these services by calling PerformCare at 877-652-7624. Any Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare enrolled child is guaranteed access to these services if they meet the eligibility requirements established by the Department of Children and Families.

**Approved providers:** Providers contracted with the Children's System of Care (CSOC) within the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

# Resources to Learn More about Autism Treatment and Intervention Approaches

The following resources might be helpful in learning more about autism treatment and intervention approaches:

## Research Reviews on Effectiveness of Various Interventions

- Association for Science in Autism Treatment: *Learn More About Specific Treatments*  
<https://asatonline.org/for-parents/learn-more-about-specific-treatments/>
- Autism New Jersey: *Treatment*  
<https://www.autismnj.org/understanding-autism/treatment/>
- National Autism Center: *National Standards Project, Phase 2*  
<https://www.nationalautismcenter.org/national-standards-project/phase-2/>
- National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice: *Evidence-Based Practices for Children, Youth, and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder*  
<https://ncaep.fpg.unc.edu/sites/ncaep.fpg.unc.edu/files/imce/documents/EBP%20Report%202020.pdf>

## Applied Behavior Analysis

- Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB)  
<https://www.bacb.com/>
- New Jersey Association for Behavior Analysis (NJABA)  
<https://njaba.org/>

## Developmental and Relationship-based Approaches

- The Greenspan Floortime Approach  
<https://www.stanleygreenspan.com/>
- Interdisciplinary Council on Development and Learning (ICDL)  
<https://www.icdl.com/>
- Profectum Foundation DIR-FCD™ Resources  
<https://profectum.org/resources/>

# Frequently Asked Questions by Families of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

## Available Services

### **What services are available through the Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare ASD benefit?**

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
- Developmental relationship-based services, including DIR Floortime
- Allied health services such as Physical Therapy (PT), Occupational Therapy (OT) and Speech Therapy (ST)
- Sensory Integration
- Skill Acquisition and Capacity Building

## Approval of Services

### **How do I know if my child is eligible for autism treatment services covered by Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare?**

All Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare members, up to age 21, with an autism diagnosis are eligible. After age 21, autism treatment services are limited to physical, occupational, and speech therapy and communication assistance devices only. Other services may be available through the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD).

### **Will the NJ Medicaid managed care organizations accept my child's existing autism diagnosis?**

The managed care organization will work with the qualified healthcare professional (QHP) and other medical professionals to gather all the information necessary.

### **Can my managed care organization (MCO) require a prior authorization for autism treatments? If so, do I need to do anything?**

Yes. Autism related services are subject to prior authorization in NJ by the Medicaid MCO. The MCO and the provider will work together to ensure services are approved and delivered to meet the needs of your child. As a caregiver, you should not have to do anything.

### **What if my child has been previously diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum? Will the managed care organization be able to exclude coverage or deny coverage because it is a pre-existing condition?**

No. Medicaid/ NJ FamilyCare does not allow services to be denied based on pre-existing conditions.

### **How often can the managed care organization (MCO) require the treatment plan be submitted for review?**

Each managed care organization will determine frequency of periodic review and treatment plan submission.

### **Can my managed care organization deny a claim based on medical necessity?**

Yes. Like treatment for other conditions, treatment for autism and autism spectrum disorders are subject to determinations of medical necessity.

### **Who determines what is medically necessary?**

The qualified healthcare professional (QHP) and the managed care organization will determine medical necessity.

### **How does the qualified healthcare professional (QHP) determine what is medically necessary?**

A QHP can diagnose a youth with an autism spectrum disorder. A QHP can also conduct the functional behavior assessment (FBA) and develop the treatment plan for your child. This plan specifies what services they believe are medically necessary.

### **If the managed care organization (MCO) denies or modifies the submitted request, what are my possible next steps?**

If the managed care organization has questions about the specific services being recommended, they will work with the qualified healthcare professional to clarify if the services are medically necessary based on national evidence based clinical guidelines. The managed care organization may deny or modify the submitted request but you have the right to file a grievance (an internal review) and/or an appeal (an external review). You can contact your MCO for more information about the submission process.

### **Who should I contact to request more hours?**

Your health care provider or the agency providing your child's service can request additional hours if a clinical need exists. They can submit a request to the managed care organization.

### **What if my child's current provider is not contracted with Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare or my child's managed care organization?**

If your provider is willing, they can complete a single case agreement to continue providing services to your child while they complete a contract with your child's managed care organization. This will help ensure continuity of care. If your child's provider does not wish to participate, they can continue to provide services until the managed care organization can authorize another provider to assume services.

### **What if my child's school provides autism services like ABA for my child?**

Receiving autism services through a school system does not prevent a child from receiving autism services through Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare. Any autism services provided by a school system will be education-based and is allowed to be provided through the school system. If a child needs autism services outside of those services provided through the school system, services may be provided through the managed care organization and are separate from the services provided through your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

## **Providers**

### **Can I pick my own provider?**

Yes, as long as the provider is enrolled in your child's managed care organization.

### **Can I switch providers if I am not happy with the services they are providing?**

Yes. You have the right to contact your child's managed care organization to request a change in provider if you feel the provider you are using is not meeting your child's needs.



### **Who can provide my child's treatment?**

All autism services must be provided by a licensed or certified clinician practicing within the scope of their license or certification. The provider must also be contracted with Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare and/or your managed care organization.

### **How can I find out if an “autism service provider” is approved by Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare to provide services in the state of NJ?**

You should contact your managed care organization (MCO) by calling the number for member services on the back of your Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare ID card to determine if the autism service provider is participating in your MCO's contracted network.

For services provided by the Children's System of Care (CSOC), such as skills acquisition and capacity building, you can call PerformCare at 1-877-652-7624. PerformCare can tell you if your child qualifies for these services and if the provider is contracted to provide them.

### **How can I find out if an “autism service provider” is licensed or certified in the state of New Jersey?**

You can look online at <https://newjersey.mylicense.com/verification/Search.aspx> to determine if a provider is licensed in the state of NJ.

You can use the Behavior Analyst Certification Board's Certificant Registry to determine whether a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) is certified in the state of New Jersey:

<https://www.bacb.com/services/o.php?page=101135>

You will still need to contact your managed care organization to determine if the autism service provider is participating in their contracted network (see previous question).

### **If my child's provider is recommending Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy and additional therapies, will the managed care organization pay for more than one service?**

Yes. The managed care organization will work with the health care professionals for each service to develop and monitor a treatment plan that offers medically necessary services.

### **Will I require a new authorization, or a new evaluation when switching providers?**

Yes. Although the need for the service has already been established, a new authorization is required because authorizations are provider specific.

### **Can my child receive Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare autism services in an outpatient clinic or other out-of-home setting?**

Yes. They can receive Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare services in an outpatient clinic or other out-of-home setting, but cannot receive Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare covered services in a school setting during school hours.

### **Can my child receive crisis services through my managed care organization?**

No. However, your child may be eligible for other Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare services, as well as Children's System of Care (CSOC) services. If your child requires crisis services, contact PerformCare for an assessment. They will determine if your child meets their requirements for services. PerformCare can be reached at 1-877-652-7624.

## Coordination of Care

### **My child has private insurance, but the services have copayments and deductibles. Will Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare cover my copayments and deductible payments?**

Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare and its managed care organizations (MCO) will cover any private insurance copayments and deductibles up to what they would cover if they were the primary payer.

Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare and its MCOs are responsible for private insurance copayments and deductibles for services provided by contracted providers. If your provider is not contracted with Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare, you may be responsible for these payments. You should contact your MCO to verify if you are responsible for any payments before making them.

### **My child has private insurance and the provider I want is not in the network of the private insurance plan, but is in the network of my managed care organization (MCO). Will the MCO cover the services?**

All members are expected to go to providers in network with their primary insurance carrier. Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare is the payer of last resort so your provider will need to bill primary insurance first.

## Language Barriers

### **If English is not my primary language, will I be able to receive translation services when speaking with the managed care organization (MCO)?**

Yes. Each MCO has a language translation service that can facilitate three-way conversations via telephone.

In the home, efforts will be made to connect families with providers that speak the family's primary language. Translation services may be utilized to accommodate language barriers as well.

### **If my child is deaf or hard of hearing, will the managed care organization be able to provide accommodations?**

Yes. Attempts will be made to obtain a provider who is fluent in American Sign Language and/or electronic translation devices may be utilized.

## Care Management

### **What is the role of my managed care organization's care manager?**

The care manager is a resource available to Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare members. Care managers assist by answering your questions and connecting you with available services. They can also connect families with other providers when the child has a co-occurring condition. Their main goal is to oversee your child's care and to help improve your healthcare experience through improved patient outcomes.

### **How do I know if my child has been assigned one of my managed care organization's care managers? Can I request one?**

The MCO care manager should reach out to the families once the need for a care manager is determined. If you feel you need a care manager, or you are not sure if you have one, you can call your managed care plan and request a contact. You should call the member services number on the back of your Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare ID card and request care management. If your child meets the requirements, the care manager will give the family a number where they can contact the care manager directly, as needed.

### **Where can I find a list of providers that are in network with my managed care organization (MCO)?**

Each MCO website has a list of providers which can be located by geographic location. You can also call the member services number on the back of your card and ask for assistance. MCOs send out a paper version of a member handbook once a year.

### **What should I do if I don't think my child's treatment is working?**

Contact your child's assigned managed care organization care manager to discuss other treatment options.

### **I'm not happy with the way my managed care organization is addressing my child's needs, who can I reach out to?**

First, you should contact your MCO directly. Your MCO should be given an opportunity to address your concerns. If you need further assistance, you can contact the Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare Autism Inquiry Helpline at (609) 588-8522 or send an email to [MAHS.ASDinquiries@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:MAHS.ASDinquiries@dhs.nj.gov).

### **I have multiple children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis. Will we have to use the same provider?**

No. However, when possible, it may be preferable to have one provider. If you have concerns, you can discuss this with your managed care member services unit or your care manager.

## **Children's System of Care**

### **What is the Children's System of Care?**

The Children's System of Care (CSOC), within the New Jersey Department of Families, is a coordinated network of services and supports that aims to support youth and families within the community and with an approach that is mindful of cultural context, the social determinants of health, and how these impact on families. CSOC serves youth with behavioral health, substance use, intellectual and/or developmental challenges through a system of care approach.

### **How do I access services through the Children's System of Care (CSOC)?**

CSOC's contracted services administrator, PerformCare, is an Administrative Services Organization (ASO) that provides member services, medical necessity determinations, initial and continuing prior authorization of services, quality management functions, as well as development and maintenance of CYBER, the electronic behavioral health information record used across CSOC. NJ's Department of Children and Families contracts with PerformCare to provide access to publicly funded services for youth up to age 21 through the CSOC.

PerformCare creates pathways for children by providing access to the right care at the right time. They are the single point of access for youth up to age 21 and are available 24/7/365. The hotline number is 1-877-652-7624.

### **How do I obtain developmental disability eligibility for my youth?**

In order to receive functional services, services for youth with intellectual/developmental disability, the youth must first be determined to be eligible.

For individuals under age 18, eligibility is determined by the Children's System of Care (CSOC).

- Application materials for individuals under 18 available on PerformCare's website: [performcarenj.org](http://performcarenj.org)
- CSOC is responsible for providing services until age 21

For individuals age 18 and older, eligibility is determined by the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD).

- Application materials for individuals 18 and older available on DDD website: [state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/home/](http://state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/home/)
- DDD is responsible for providing services after age 21

### **What is the Children's System of Care's care management service?**

Based in each county, Care Management Organizations are CSOC's local lead system partner that provide comprehensive care coordination and planning for youth and their families with moderate and complex needs through the Wraparound model. The model is an intensive, individualized care planning and management process. The model brings together the family, the professionals working with the family, and informal and community supports that create a child family team, who is responsible for developing and implement a plan to meet the family's needs.

### **I have a care manager through the Children's System of Care's Care Management Organization (CMO). Will this affect my child's services through managed care?**

No. The CSOC CMO care manager and managed care organization's care manager will work in coordination to ensure services are provided appropriately.

### **What other services are available through the Children's System of Care?**

- Mobile Response Stabilization Services
- Family Support Organizations
- Intensive In-Community /Behavioral Assistant (IIC/BA)
- Intensive In-Home (IIH) and Family Support Services (FSS)
- Out of Home (OOH) Treatment Services
- Substance Use Treatment Services
- Respite

# Resources

## State Agencies

### **New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services (DMAHS):**

Administers Medicaid's state- and federally-funded NJ FamilyCare programs for certain groups of low- to moderate-income adults and children. <https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmahs/home/>

### **New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Children's System of Care (CSOC):**

Serves children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral health care challenges and their families; children with developmental and intellectual disabilities and their families; and, children with substance use challenges and their families. CSOC is committed to providing services based on the needs of the child and family in a family-centered, community-based environment.

<https://www.nj.gov/dcf/about/divisions/dcsc/>

### **New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education (NJ DOE, OSE):**

Your local school district is responsible for providing special education services. The Office of Special Education within New Jersey's Department of Education supervises and monitors the implementation of special education services. This includes providing professional development, technical assistance, coaching, and resources to educators, parents and other stakeholders across the state to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, ages 3 through 21. <https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/info/>

### **New Jersey Department of Health, Early Intervention System (EIS):**

Implements New Jersey's statewide system of services for infants and toddlers, birth to age 3, with developmental delays or disabilities, and their families. <https://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/eis/>

### **New Jersey Department of Health, Special Child Health Case Management Units (SCHCMU):**

Provide comprehensive, coordinated, culturally competent case management services to families of children and youth with special health care needs from birth through 21 years of age.

<https://nj.gov/health/fhs/specialneeds/case-management/>

### **New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD):**

Provides public funding for services and supports that assist New Jersey adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities age 21 and older to live as independently as possible.

<https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/>

### **New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services (DDS):**

Serves as a single point of entry for disability-related information and provides self-directed, non-medical personal care assistance for eligible individuals with permanent physical disabilities through its Personal Assistance Services Program (PASP). <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dds/home/index.html>

## Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare Autism Inquiry Helpline

### **Autism Benefit Questions and Concerns**

(609)588-8522

MAHS.ASDinquiries@dhs.nj.gov

## Medicaid Managed Care Organizations

### **Aetna Better Health of New Jersey**

Member Services: 855-232-3596

### **Amerigroup New Jersey**

Member Services: 800-600-4441

### **Horizon New Jersey Health**

Member Services: 800-682-9090

### **UnitedHealthcare Community Plan**

Member Services: 800-941-4647

### **WellCare**

Member Services: 888-453-2534

## Autism Organizations

### **Asperger/Autism Spectrum Education Network (ASPEN)**

Provides families and individuals whose lives are affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders and Nonverbal Learning Disabilities with education, support, and advocacy. <https://aspennj.org/>

### **Autism New Jersey**

A nonprofit agency committed to ensuring safe and fulfilling lives for individuals with autism, their families, and the professionals who support them through awareness, credible information, education, and public policy initiatives. <https://www.autismnj.org/>

### **FACES 4 Autism**

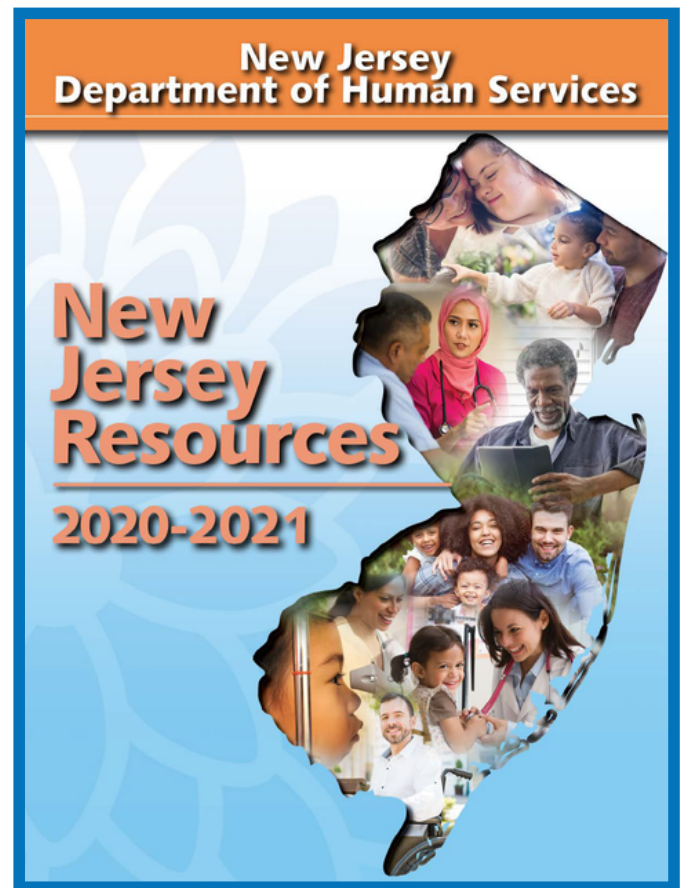
Provides autism education and resources to families and educators in the South Jersey area. <https://faces4autism.org/>

### **Parents of Autistic Children (POAC)**

Provides training for parents and educators, recreational and support services to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families, training for police and first responders, and addresses, supports, and promotes legislative issues that affect those with autism and their families. <https://www.poac.net/>

## Disability Resources in New Jersey

A comprehensive directory of organizations, programs, and services available to assist and support New Jersey's citizens with disabilities and their families is published annually by the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services (DDS). Available in both English and Spanish, *New Jersey Resources* can be accessed electronically through the DDS website (<https://nj.gov/humanservices/dds/home/>) or printed copies can be requested by emailing [dds.publications@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:dds.publications@dhs.nj.gov).





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This guide was developed by the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services with the assistance of the Autism Stakeholder Executive Planning Committee.

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