

AUTism! Did You Know???

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov), “Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges.” Sometimes, the individual also has an Intellectual Disability (ID) component. If someone has both of these, it is referred to as having an Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD).

The following information is a starting point of what to do as far as looking for state resources in Texas.

Documentation of Autism/Developmental Disability

In Texas, it is the local mental health authorities (LMHAs) that initially certify a child’s IDD status and eligibility and is sometimes still referred to as mental health services. From the BluebonnetTrails website:

“**Eligibility Determination:** A determination of eligibility is an assessment (or endorsement of an assessment) to determine if a person has an intellectual disability or is a member of the DADS priority population for IDD. The assessment uses standardized tests to determine a person’s IQ and adaptive behavior level (ability to perform life skills) and is conducted by a qualified professional. An assessment typically includes an interview with the person, the person’s legally authorized representative, or if the person doesn’t have an LAR, others who are actively involved with the person.”

This assessment or endorsement of previous findings serves several purposes: to begin process of serving children and families who qualify due to IDD eligibility, document that the child had this eligibility before age 18yrs (the criteria for IDD changes after age 18yrs), and document IDD for use in determining eligibility for waiver services. This finding can also be used for school’s process of determining eligibility for special education services. LMHA can also be used if there is a delay in seeing a neurologist or developmental pediatrician and the family has questions about the individual’s functioning.

<https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhsa/lmha-list/>

Waiver Programs-CRUCIAL

In Texas, the purpose of waiver programs is to provide assistance to eligible individuals and promote self-determination. This includes supports

to live either in their communities/homes, group homes, or institutions based on what their goals are. Waiver programs are especially helpful for families in the long term to help care for the person. Texas has several different interest lists (wait lists) with different eligibility not only IDD. While a person can be on all the interest lists, they can only be receiving services from one waiver at a time.

These interest lists are years long so getting the person's name on the list as soon as you know there is a diagnosis is **crucial**. Another tip, eligibility is determined once the person's name comes to the "top of the list" meaning a person can be on all the interest lists. Many families have the person's name on all the waiver interest lists because you never know what the eligibility will be once their name comes up for determination. Below is a link to the different waivers and who to contact in order to place a person's name on the list:

http://www.dads.state.tx.us/providers/waiver_comparisons/LTSS-Waivers.pdf

Education is guaranteed by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

<http://idea.ed.gov/>

In Texas, there are three stages of education services for a child with a disability.

http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum_and_Instructional_Programs/Special_Education/Programs_and_Services/Special_Education_Rules_and_Regulations/

Early Childhood Intervention

This is a statewide federally mandated program that can help families with service coordination, case management, therapy services as appropriate, and help parents transition to either public school or other care after the child ages out at 3yrs old.

<http://www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/index.shtml>

Special Education or 504 services in school

This programming is available for children ages 3yrs to 21yrs old. During this time is when families have to work closely with schools to make sure

children's learning Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

<http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=2147497444>

Transition Planning

This stage of education technically begins when the child turns 14yrs old. It is at this time that the child, family and school begin to discuss the child's future education goals and craft a plan to help them meet their goals.

<http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/TransitionIEP.html>

This is a very brief listing of information to get your family started on this life long journey or learning and planning. Welcome to this special group!