

The First Steps...

If you are having concerns about your young child – about their development, speech or behavior in general, do not “wait and see.” Early interventions are the best way to help your child in the long run. You can find development information at www.cdc.gov/ActEarly, the “Learn the Signs, Act Early” campaign.

If your suspicions are confirmed...

1. **Contact your regular pediatrician and explain your concerns.** He or she will most likely check some standard milestones to see where your child lies. Your doctor may write a referral to a specialist such as a pediatric neurologist, clinical psychologist, or developmental-behavioral pediatrician for an evaluation. Ask for the referral if he or she does not suggest it. Follow your instincts as a parent and ensure a thorough evaluation is done if you have concerns.
2. **Contact Early Childhood Intervention (ECI).** This Nueces county agency serves children from birth to three years. They will assess your child at no cost to you, and determine if he or she is eligible for services. Services are offered in a community setting or in the child’s home to develop cognitive, social/emotional, motor, self-help and communication skills. Service coordination is provided and additional services include family support groups, educational classes, and counseling.

Local ECI – 212 S Staples, Corpus Christi, TX 78401 (361) 980-9652

www.ncmhm.org

State information on ECI: <http://www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/>

3. **Contact your child’s school.** For children and young adults, ages three to 21, services are available through the local school district. A referral for a “child study” assessment may be made. This may lead to individualized testing for children who may require specialized assistance and/or support. To begin this process, contact the director of special education at the local school district, or your school’s guidance counselor.
4. **Some area specialists who assess for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD):**
Driscoll Children’s Hospital 694-5000 www.driscollchildrens.org
Neurology: Carol Deline MD, Ching Wang MD PhD, Gary Bobele MD
Developmental-Behavioral: William Reed MD
Psychology: Thomas Graf PhD

Bay Area Counseling: 549-6972 Lucy Williams PhD

Alan Fisher PhD: Clinical Psychologist 992-9624

So you just received the diagnosis ...

It's time to take a deep breath. We understand some of the feelings you may be going through. Remember, many of us are parents with autistic children as well. There is fear, guilt, sorrow, and oftentimes, even relief. You now have information about your child that will help you make decisions for their care and school, as well as help pave the way for a smoother life in the future.

“Now what do I do...”

1. **Ask for help.** You've taken the first step and contacted an organization which can hopefully help you on this journey. ASRC is located at 3440 Alameda in Corpus Christi. Phone: 851-5111 www.asrc-cc.org
2. **Join the ASRC closed Facebook group.** Find us at “Autism Spectrum Resource Center.” This Facebook group allows parents to ask questions and offer suggestions to others. Educational articles are posted several times a week to keep you informed of strategies and new research. Social events are periodically posted as well.
3. **Join the ASRC autism social group** at www.meetup.com/CCASTeam. This group meets several times a month and has events such as parent coffees, family art or Lego nights and fun trips in the community.
4. **Go on to Facebook and “like” the following groups.** This will give you updates on what is happening locally, as well as what advances are being made for the autism community as a whole. Several relevant articles and services are highlighted.
 - a. Coastal Bend Autism Advocacy –CBAA (local)
 - b. Texas Autism, Inc (South Texas Region) (local)
 - c. Autism Speaks (national)
5. **Get some support.** Hopefully you have friends and family members who you can turn to for help, advice and support. Another important form of support and friendship is from other families with the same challenges.

Sign up for *Texas Parent to Parent*: www.TXp2p.org (866) 896-6001

This organization has online information, newsletters, training, and matches parents up for one-on-one assistance and advice.

Join a local support group such as the Autism Spectrum Resource Center's Support Team at www.meetup.com/CCASTeam, or SEPAC- the Special Ed Parent Advisory Committee for your school district.

6. **Contact your child's guidance counselor at school, and start the procedures for having a 504 or an IEP written.** These legal documents will give your child certain accommodations at school to enable him or her to be more successful.
 - a. ***The difference between a 504 and an IEP:*** A 504 plan offers accommodations to those students with disabilities, so that they can safely pursue the same opportunities as everyone else. Accommodations may include (but not limited to): extended time to take exams, preferential seating, or note-taking assistance. An IEP (Individualized Education Plan), which falls under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, is concerned with providing educational services. These may include the accommodations of a 504, plus some services such as Occupational Therapy or Speech Therapy. Each student's IEP is written with that particular student's needs in mind, and is a collaboration of the parents and school administrators. "Wikipedia" online has a thorough description of the IEP process.

7. **Order the Autism Speaks "First 100-day kit."** This gives advice on how to handle the first 100 days after the autism diagnosis. Available at www.autismspeaks.org. They also offer an ***Asperger's and High Functioning Autism*** kit, as well as one for individuals ***Transitioning*** from a school to work environment. Some of these are also available in Spanish.

8. **If you are a military family, go to:** www.operationautismonline.org
This is an online guide and is military specific. Steps lead you through deployments, moves, Tricare, etc.

9. **Educate yourself**
 - a. **Take a training class from Parents Resource Network TEAM**
(877) 832-8945 www.partnerstx.org

 - b. **Take online courses from the Education Service Center (ESC2)**
www.autism.esc2.net

 - c. **Go to the annual Texas Autism Conference.** This is a several day event. Admission (and sometimes hotel) stipends are available to parents through CBAA and ESC2. You will learn a lot about your child and meet many people of interest. www.autism.esc2.net

 - d. **Take out a book at the Autism Spectrum Resource Center.** Available at our location: 3440 Alameda. There are many brand new books and videos that are available to the public.

 - e. **Watch for events and articles in the month of April – Autism Awareness Month**

What services are available for my child?

You will be glad you know that there are several organizations and groups dedicated to helping your family, in addition to ASRC. Some provide medical therapies, some job counseling and some, simply, fun. Learn as much as you can and take advantage of these services. (This list is not comprehensive, as new facilities open or close. Please let us know if there is a facility that should –or not-be included)

Financial Assistance for living and medical care:

1. **Visit the local MHMR (Mental Health) office for IDD Service.**

Those eligible include people with autism, IDD (Intellectual Developmental Disabilities), PDD (Pervasive Developmental Disorder), or Asperger's Syndrome. Services may include: service coordination, respite, training and support, vocational training, employment assistance and special therapies. They will also check for financial assistance eligibility such as Medicaid.

MHMR Nueces County: 1546 South Brownlee Blvd, Corpus Christi 884-9854
www.ncmhm.org

Outside Nueces County: "Coastal Plains Community Center"
headquarters: 200 Marriott Dr, Portland, TX (but have several satellite locations)
361-777-3991 24 hour hotline: 800-841-6467 www.coastalplainsctr.org

2. **Cardon Financial** – First floor of Driscoll Children's Hospital 694-5163

For patients of Driscoll Children's Hospital, there is a financial services office which can help you fill out Medicaid forms if needed. No appointment necessary – open M-W 8am-8pm, Th-Sun 11am-3pm, and 4-8pm. Across from Pharmacy.

3. **Sign up for the Medicaid Waiver Programs.** These programs are based on the child's income (not the parents) in order for them to qualify for Medicaid and receive additional services. There are three waiting lists you should get on now for services that will make a big difference later. These lists are years long, so sign up soon. Not every program will be appropriate for every child. Info on all three can be found online at <http://www.dads.state.tx.us>. If you are interested in finding out more, be specific when you visit MHMR. They may only tell you about the services you specifically ask about – so ask about them all! You may qualify.

CLASS (Community Living & Support Services) (877) 438-5658

CLASS provides home- and community-based services to people with related conditions as a cost-effective alternative to placement in an intermediate care facility. Services may be O/T, P/T, Speech, respite, psychological.

MDCP (Medically Dependant Children's Program) (877) 438-5658

MDCP provides services to support families caring for children and young adults who are medically dependent. Some services include respite, adaptive aids, financial aid, and support services.

HCS (Home and Community Services) (800) 458-9858

HCS provides individualized services and supports to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are living with their family, in their own home or in other community settings, such as small group homes. Some services include counseling, therapies, housing and employment assistance.

4. **SSI (Supplemental Security Income) (800) 772-1213** www.ssa.gov/disability
Monthly payment and Medicaid, dependent upon family income. Designed to help those with disabilities, and provides cash to meet basic needs. SSI provides a monthly check plus Medicaid through the Social Security Administration.
5. **Texas Home Living (TxHmL)** www.dads.state.tx.us/providers/TxHmL
Provides essential services and supports to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who live in their family's home, or their own home. Information available at MHMR.

Special Education Services and Lawyers:

1. **PPCD (Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities)** for ages 3-5. 696-4000
This is a free service but there is an initial evaluation. Check your school district at the Office of Special Ed. May be referred by ECI, your doctor, or yourself.
2. **The Rise School** (a private school) for ages 18mo to 6 years. 814-9399
Geared towards children with developmental delays or disabilities, they offer limited tuition scholarships. www.riseschool.org/corpuschristi
3. **Mary Grett School** is a unique school that provides academic instruction, transitional activities, life skills development activities, and actual work site skills development activities for students who are 18-22 years old. www.marygrett.ccisd.us
4. **Look into the Special Education department at your school district.** Most likely there is a parent advocacy group geared towards your child and their education. In CCISD this is *SEPAC: Special Ed Parent Advisory Committee*. This group meets the first Monday of the month at the Lozano Instructional Center, 650 Osage 696-4000
5. **CCISD: PALS (Program for Academic, Language & Social Skills) and SAIL (Successful Academic Inclusive Learning) programs.** Special programs that work with qualified special needs children. Available only at select locations.

6. **Special Education Lawyers:** If you have problems with the IEP/504 and your school system, the following lawyers specialize in special needs education law:

Christopher Jonas, Special Education Lawyer and Advocate 361-937-1801
Jonas4IDEA@aol.com

Matthew Finch, Lawyer of Special Education issues (will travel here)
San Antonio, Texas phone: [\(210\) 223-1123](tel:(210)223-1123) www.MFinchLaw.com

Therapies:

1. **Spectrum Counseling:** www.spectrumcounseling.net 3440 Alameda, 851-5111
Offers one-on-one counseling and group social skills training
2. **Therapy Connections of South Texas:** 1001 Louisiana Ave, Ste 204 815-2433
www.therapyconnectionsofsouthtexas.com Offers ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) and music therapy
3. **Legacy Therapy Center:** 5633 South Staples Street, 855-1352
Offers pediatric therapies in Speech, O/T (Occupational Therapy), P/T (Physical Therapy) and social services
4. **Pediatric Therapy Associates:** www.pediatrictherapyassociatescc.com,
Offers pediatric therapies in P/T, O/T Speech Therapy 853-0488
5. **Driscoll Children's Hospital:** www.driscollchildrens.org 694-5000
Rehab center offers P/T, O/T, Speech Therapy
6. **The Speech Center:** 3765 S Alameda St # 318, 334-5657
Offers Pediatric Speech Therapy

Dentists: (recommended by families)

1. **Kennedy Pediatric Dental**, three locations in Corpus Christi, 992-9500 (Saratoga)
www.paulkennedydds.com
2. **Corpus Christi General Dentistry**, 3420 S Alameda, 857-5494
www.smilecorpuschristi.com

Pediatricians: (recommended by families)

1. **Almouie Pediatrics**, Dr. Almouie, five locations throughout Coastal Bend
www.AlmouiePediatrics.com
2. **Kids Clinic PA**, Dr. William Fader, 994-7255 www.kidsclinicpa.com
3. **Lira and Lira Pediatrics**, 4621 South Staples 851-0000
4. **Tots and Teens**, Corpus and Robstown www.totsandteenspediatrics.com
5. **Naval Health Clinic**: NAS Corpus Christi, Dr Rigonan
6. **Neurofeedback:** **Dr Alan Fisher, PhD**, 5402 South Staples, Corpus Christi, 992-9624 www.AlanFisherPhD.com
7. **Neuro-Immunology:** **Dr. Bruce Russell**, Port Aransas, (neuro-immunology) 749-1930

Dieticians:

1. **Tori Jarzabkowski, RD, LD at Almouie Pediatrics**. 991-5437 Works with children and parents on autism specific diets such as Gluten Free/Casein Free

Activities and Entertainment:

1. **Autism Spectrum Resource Center's Support Team:**
www.meetup.com/CCASiteam Offers outings such as bowling and movie nights for ASD children and families
2. **Glenoak Therapeutic Riding Center:** Equine-Assisted therapy and rehab
http://www.reidbthomas.com/Glenoak_Program.html
3. **Children's Association for Maximum Potential:** www.campcamp.org
Camp for autistic children and their families
4. **Dreams, Drums and Rainbows:** Offers social interaction and mini-camps for special needs kids. Periodic camps advertised on ASRC and meetup.
5. **Local Summer Vacation Bible Schools for Special Needs Kids** and siblings:
New locations coming summer 2013
6. **Sports:** Soccer, Baseball and Basketball for Special Needs kids
The Miracle League of Corpus Christi www.tmlcc.org 993-2209
7. **Sports:** Basketball (Summer), Soccer (Fall) First Baptist Church on Ocean Drive,
contact Cliff 947-7734 or DeeLynn 992-8299
8. **Morgan's Wonderland:** The world's first fully-accessible family fun park in San Antonio. www.morganswonderland.com Very affordable, safe and fun.

**** Resources come from a combination of family recommendations, company interaction with ASRC and literature provided from organizations. Resources are listed for informational purposes only, and ASRC is not responsible for actions of any resource listed here, besides the Autism Spectrum Resource Center, and the Autism Spectrum Resource Center Support Team.*

Notes from a local adult with ASD:

From time to time, I have examined my life among the neurotypicals. Over the years, I have had various thoughts about this life as a permanent foreigner in an innately hostile country. Many of these would apply more to my life as an adult than as a child, but they reflect how I have been treated over the decades by "normal" people.

I may lack empathy, but I still have compassion.

I'm not anti-social, you are excessively pro-social.

It is no less insane to sit all day in a freezing stadium to scream about young men chasing a pointy leather ball...than it is for me to sit in a comfortable living room and compile lists of historical US population trends. My insane obsession costs less, won't endanger my health, and I can still sing at the end of it.

If you're allowed to hug me whenever you want, then I am allowed to tap out numerical sequences with my fingers around you whenever I want.

200 years ago, most people thought slavery was okay. It was abnormal to dislike it. 400 years ago, most people thought a republic was a stupid idea. It was abnormal to like it. Your "normal" could be just a passing historical fad.

If you can have a bad day, so can I. If I can't have any bad days, neither can you.

Live by the same standard you demand of me. I will remember every time you don't.

I am hard-wired to live alone and like it. If that's the only way I am allowed a bit of contentment, I will take that route and not shed a tear.

For you, "out of sight, out of mind" is an insult. For me, it's the only thing that makes any sense.

If you think I am trying to make you feel stupid by using words you don't understand, then you are trying to make me feel stupid by using body language and facial expressions I do not understand.

If I can't tell you all about the ants I spent an hour watching, don't tell me about American Idol. If you're allowed to be bored and dismissive of my stupid ants, I am allowed to be bored and dismissive of your stupid TV show.

"It's how everybody thinks." is no better than a circle of schoolyard bullies who chose to beat someone up for wearing the wrong color of shoes.

Hi, I have Asperger's, it's no excuse for how I treat you; what's your excuse for how you treat me?

