

Accessible Clinical Services for Early Child Development

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Background

Although many resources¹⁻⁴ exist to help caregivers determine what to do when concerned about a child's development, the information is often not readily available, laden with jargon, or complicated to navigate. As such, the **aim** of this project was to create a **brief**, plain-English **infographic** that can be easily referenced by a **broad audience**, including parents, caregivers, educators, and clinical service providers.

Contents

Autism New Jersey,¹ the New Jersey state government website,² SPAN Parent Advocacy Network,³ and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention⁴ were assessed for parallel information regarding referral services for childhood developmental concerns. Each website contained valuable information; however, no one site provided a concise, plain-English infographic **summarizing appropriate referrals for childhood developmental concerns**. Information from each resource was included on this infographic in an accessible format, including via clickable links if accessed digitally and QR codes that can be scanned with a smartphone.

Concerned about a child's development?

Intervention is likely to be **more effective** and **less costly** when it is provided **earlier in life** rather than later.*

High quality early intervention can **reduce incidence of future problems** in learning, behavior and health status for vulnerable infants and toddlers.*

Here's what to do:

Below Age 3

Contact **Early Intervention Services** for a **free** in-home developmental evaluation at 800-653-4463

Contact **Children's Specialized Hospital** for a **free** virtual developmental screening via video or phone call

Ages 3-5

Contact **Children's Specialized Hospital** for a **free** virtual developmental screening

Contact the **school district** in which the child resides for an evaluation

An evaluation may determine that the child qualifies as "preschool disabled" — this term is used regardless of diagnosis for children ages 3-5.

Find a **developmental-behavioral pediatrician** by calling the number on the back of your insurance card

If pursuing **occupational or speech therapy**, ask your doctor to write a prescription for these services to be eligible for insurance coverage

Over Age 5

Contact the **school district** in which the child resides to request an evaluation from the Child Study Team

Children have a **right** to a **free**, appropriate **public education**



navigateresources.net/anj/

Resources

NJ Parent Link



nj.gov/njparentlink/



spanadvocacy.org

Discussion

A lack of accessible resources on how to connect a child with appropriate developmental services can result in a delay in intervention or a lack of appropriate intervention altogether. As stated on the infographic, intervention is likely to be **more effective and less expensive** when it is provided **earlier** than later.⁴ This affects the long-term wellbeing and positive outcomes for individuals facing developmental challenges, including autism spectrum disorder. This infographic aims to ease the process of obtaining evidence-based knowledge and is geared toward a broad audience.

Specifically, this infographic provides important information about services for children older than 3 years of age—who do *not* qualify for state early intervention services—and younger than kindergarten age, when resources are more readily available through the school system. This is important as this age group (3-5) may have increased difficulty accessing services.

References

1. Autism New Jersey. (2019, November 25). *Age-related concerns*. Autism NJ. <https://autismnj.org/information-services/age-related-concerns/>
2. NJ Parent Link. (2024). *State of New Jersey parent link: The early childhood, parenting, and professional resource center*. <https://www.nj.gov/njparentlink/>
3. SPAN Parent Advocacy Network. (2022, September 1). *Resources & Materials*. <https://spanadvocacy.org/resource-library/>
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, April 3). *Why act early if you're concerned about development?* U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/whyActEarly.html>