

Newly Identified with Autism

A Caregiver's Resource for Connecting to the Support You Need



If your child or loved one has recently been identified as autistic, you will likely have many questions. You might feel overwhelmed, uncertain, and unsure of what to do next. These feelings are common and Autism Society San Diego is here to support you.

Being identified with autism doesn't change who your child or loved one is; they're still the same person you've known and loved every step of the way. You can use this new information to better understand your child's experiences. And while it may feel overwhelming, being identified opens doors to valuable resources and support for your family. As their strongest advocate, this understanding will help you meet their needs and ensure they have the support they need to thrive.

You aren't alone on this journey. Connecting with other families, community groups, and resources can provide invaluable support. Here are a few ideas about what to do next:

Learn about Autism

The more you understand about autism, the better you'll be able to support your child and make informed decisions about services that are best aligned with their individual strengths and needs.

- Visit our website, social media pages, and YouTube channel for educational resources.
- Seek to learn from the lived experiences of the autism community. There are many autistic advocates who have written books and blogs, and many have active social media accounts sharing their experiences.

Education

Beginning with early intervention services, your local school district offers services to children with disabilities through age 21. Even if your child has a medical diagnosis of autism, the school will conduct an educational evaluation to identify specific educational needs. Connect with your local school district to learn more about what special education services are available to you.

Interventions & Therapies

There are a range of interventions and therapies that may be helpful to your child as they grow and develop. Families should learn about the options, ask questions, and choose what they feel is in the best interest of their child and family. Each person with autism is unique and it will be important to choose services and supports that best support your child's specific needs. No single service or intervention is likely to meet the needs of every individual with autism. Services and supports should be offered by trained, qualified professionals. The interventions and therapies should encourage self-determination, foster community involvement, and improve quality of life.

Some options include:

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
- Assistive Technology
- Augmentative & Alternative Communication
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Speech Therapy

Paying for What You Need

It is common to have questions and concerns about the cost of interventions, therapies, and other services. There are programs to help, including:

- Private Health Insurance
- Medicaid (Medi Cal)
- San Diego Regional Center

San Diego Regional Center

Any San Diego or Imperial County resident believed to have a developmental disability may apply for services. Eligibility is determined by the social, medical, and psychological information gathered during the intake process. San Diego Regional Center provides a variety of services to persons with developmental disabilities and their families. Services are based on the client's individual needs and intended to maximize their independence, full potential, and quality of life. Services are lifelong and you can learn more at www.sdrc.org.

Find Support

Processing this new diagnosis, learning about autism, and navigating next steps can be overwhelming and you may be feeling many different emotions at the same time. Connecting with others in the autism community can reduce feelings of isolation, give you a place to turn to for support, and help you better understand the services and resources available to you.

- Join us at one of our monthly support groups
- Join us at one of our monthly events
- Research the many autism-related programs in San Diego County — many can be funded by the San Diego Regional Center

Get Connected to the Resources You Need

The Autism Ask Line is a call-in line for caregivers, autistic self-advocates, and autism service professionals in San Diego County. Each call will be answered by a peer resource specialist who has personal experience with autism. To reach the Autism Ask Line, call 858-715-0678.