

Arlington and Tarrant County First 90 Days Checklist



Get matched with a BCBA
secure.alpacahealth.io/signup

Gather the paperwork in week 1

Health plans, clinics, schools and state programs each ask for some of these papers. Keep them in one folder and make copies of the diagnosis report.

☐ **The full written diagnosis report**

For ABA, Texas Medicaid looks for the DSM criteria, the severity level and the standardized test used, such as the ADOS. A screening checklist like the M-CHAT does not replace that test.

☐ **A signed referral for an ABA evaluation**

Texas Medicaid needs a signed and dated referral before any ABA evaluation or treatment. Your child's primary care provider or the doctor who made the diagnosis can write it.

☐ **Papers for a Medicaid application**

Your Texas Benefits asks about everyone applying, including Social Security numbers and birth dates, citizenship or immigration status, money from jobs and other sources, the value of cars and other property, and the bills you pay.

☐ **A written evaluation request to your school district, if your child is 3 or older**

Send it to the district's director of special education or your child's principal, and keep a dated copy. The district's 15 school day deadline to answer starts only with a written request.

☐ **School records and reports from other doctors**

Cook Children's Child Study Center asks for supporting paperwork from schools and other physicians before an evaluation. Keep a copy of everything you send.

☐ **The name of the school district that serves your address**

Mansfield ISD serves sections of Arlington and assigns each student to the school zoned for the home address. Confirm your district before you send the evaluation request.

☐ **A folder for every letter you get**

Texas HHS mails a packet once a child is approved for STAR Kids, and MHMR of Tarrant County contacts you when your child's name reaches the top of an interest list.

Make the first calls in week 1

Who to call and how	What they do
Under 3. ECI of North Central Texas, run by My Health My Resources (MHMR) of Tarrant County. 817-446-8000 or 1-800-754-0524, weekdays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Evaluates your baby or toddler and plans services with you. The evaluation, case management and the service plan cost your family nothing. Later services are billed to Medicaid or insurance with your permission, and families pay a monthly share on a state sliding fee scale based on ability to pay. A child with Medicaid pays ECI nothing that month. Anyone can ask for an evaluation.
3 and up, Arlington ISD. Child Find at (682) 867-7690 or childfind@arlingtonisd.org .	Evaluates children 3 to 21 for special education. Write to the director of special education or your child's principal and keep a copy, since a written request starts the district's 15 school day deadline to answer.
3 and up, Mansfield ISD, which serves sections of Arlington. Special Education at 817-299-4300, 1016 Magnolia St., Mansfield.	Evaluates children at no cost to families. For a child 3 to 5 who is not in school yet, fill out the MISD Child Find Intake or call to start. For a child already in a Mansfield ISD school, ask the teacher or campus administrator.
Any age. Texas Parent to Parent, 866-896-6001.	Staff who are parents of children with disabilities answer calls, and the group shares a Care Notebook for keeping your child's records in one place.
Birth to 26. PACT Project, the Partners Resource Network parent center for Region 11, which includes Arlington ISD and Mansfield ISD. 1-855-974-1368, or the Region 11 coordinator at 817-757-3572.	A federally funded parent training and information center. It explains your child's rights under IDEA, the federal special education law, by phone and in person, and its services are at no cost to parents.

Set up how therapy gets paid for

Start with the coverage your child has now. If your child has no coverage yet, send the Medicaid application first.

☐ Know that Texas Medicaid covers ABA for members 20 and younger

Since February 1, 2022, Texas Medicaid has covered applied behavior analysis (ABA) evaluation and treatment for members 20 and younger with autism. The ABA provider asks for approval before therapy starts.

☐ Learn what EPSDT means for your child

EPSDT stands for Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment, which Texas calls Texas Health Steps. For Medicaid members from birth through age 20, it requires Texas Medicaid to pay for medically necessary treatment, even when the state plan does not list the service.

☐ Find out whether your child belongs in STAR Kids

STAR Kids is Texas Medicaid managed care for children and youth 20 and younger with disabilities. A child on Medicaid is enrolled if the child also gets SSI, has Medicare, or is in a waiver such as MDCP, YES, CLASS, DBMD, HCS or TxHmL. Each member gets a service coordinator.

☐ Save your STAR Kids plan's member services number

Two plans serve the Tarrant service area, which covers Denton, Hood, Johnson, Parker, Tarrant and Wise counties. Cook Children's Health Plan is 1-844-843-0004, weekdays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Aetna is 844-787-5437.

☐ If your child does not have Medicaid yet, apply online or call 2-1-1

Apply at YourTexasBenefits.com or call 2-1-1. Texas HHS says a child has to be enrolled in Medicaid before STAR Kids can start.

☐ If you have private insurance, ask whether the Texas autism law covers your plan

Texas Insurance Code section 1355.015 applies to state-regulated group health plans. It covers treatment your child's primary care doctor prescribes, which can include ABA, when the diagnosis came before age 10, and from age 10 a plan may cap ABA at \$36,000 a year. The Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) does not regulate most plans, including self-funded ones. The TDI help line is 800-252-3439.

Join the waiver interest lists this month

Waiver and who it is for	How to join the interest list
HCS, for children and adults with an intellectual disability or a related condition who live with family, in their own home or in a small group home.	Call MHMR of Tarrant County, the local IDD authority, at 817-569-4140.
TxHmL, for children and adults with an intellectual disability or a related condition who live in their own home or their family's home.	Ask MHMR of Tarrant County in the same call, at 817-569-4140.
CLASS, for children and adults with a related condition that began before age 22.	Call Texas HHS at 1-877-438-5658.
MDCP, for children and young adults 20 and younger who are medically fragile, as an alternative to a nursing facility.	Ask for this list in the same call to 1-877-438-5658.
DBMD, for children and adults who are deaf-blind, or have a condition that leads to deaf-blindness, and who have another disability.	Ask for this list in the same call to 1-877-438-5658.

The Arc of Texas says you do not have to prove your child is eligible to join the lists, because eligibility is checked when your child's name reaches the top. Names go on the lists first come, first served, and The Arc of Texas reports waits of as much as 16 years for some waivers. MHMR of Tarrant County says some needs can be met through other programs while you wait. For every step, including the YES Waiver, see the Texas Medicaid waivers guide on the last page.

Ask about the Children's Autism Program

The Texas HHS Children's Autism Program is separate from Medicaid. It pays for focused ABA, a shorter treatment aimed at specific behaviors or skills, through local agencies.

☐ **Check that your child is 3 to 15 years old**

Services end on the child's 16th birthday. The child needs a documented autism diagnosis from a qualified professional and has to live in Texas.

☐ **Plan around the hour limits**

Treatment is limited to 180 hours in a 12-month period and 720 hours over the child's lifetime.

☐ **Plan for parent training**

Parent training is a required part of the service. The child and the parents have to attend at least 85 percent of scheduled treatment.

☐ **Call 2-1-1 to find the local agency and apply**

Local contractors provide all of the services. Call 2-1-1, or (877) 541-7905, to find the one closest to you and complete enrollment. Texas HHS answers questions about the program at 512-438-5356, weekdays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time.

☐ **Ask what your family will pay before you enroll**

Ask the agency about your family's share of the cost and how soon your child can start. If your child has Medicaid, Texas Medicaid also covers ABA.

Get a full evaluation if you still need one

Cook Children's Child Study Center in Fort Worth evaluates and diagnoses children with complex developmental and behavioral needs. It is at 1300 W. Lancaster Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76102, and the phone number is 682-303-9200.

☐ **Talk to your child's pediatrician first**

The center asks families to share their concerns with the pediatrician before any new patient scheduling.

☐ **Contact ECI or your school district before you schedule**

The center asks families of children under 3 to contact ECI, and families of children 3 and older to contact the school district, before it schedules a new patient.

☐ **Send the center's application**

The center reviews a completed application to decide whether your child's needs fit its services, and then contacts you about an appointment.

☐ **Send paperwork from school and other doctors**

The center asks for supporting paperwork from schools and other physicians. Keep your own copy of each page.

☐ **Ask for a report that Texas Medicaid accepts for ABA**

Texas Medicaid needs a diagnosis made or reconfirmed within the last 3 years, with the DSM criteria, the severity level and a standardized diagnostic test. It accepts a diagnosis from a developmental pediatrician, neurologist, psychiatrist, licensed psychologist or a diagnostic team.

☐ **Ask these questions when you call**

Does the center take my child's health plan? How long is the wait after the application is reviewed? Who writes the report, and when will we get it?

Apply for grants and money

Program and who can apply	What it pays for and how to apply
PDSES, Parent-Directed Special Education Services. Texas public school students, Pre-K to 12th grade, who get special education through an IEP.	A one-time \$1,500 grant for learning materials and services such as extra speech therapy or tutoring. Grants go first-come, first-served, and each student can get one only once. Apply through the PDSES Parent Portal at spedtex.org , and join the 2026 to 2027 email list for the application window. SPEDTex is 1-855-773-3839.
SSI, Supplemental Security Income. Children under 18 with a disability.	A monthly payment for a child whose condition causes marked and severe functional limits expected to last at least 12 months. Social Security counts part of the parents' income and resources. A Texas child with SSI and Medicaid is enrolled in STAR Kids. Apply at ssa.gov or call 1-800-772-1213, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. local time.
Texas ABLE account. Texas residents whose disability began before age 46.	A savings account for disability-related expenses. The age limit rose to 46 on January 1, 2026, under the ABLE Age Adjustment Act. The Texas Prepaid Higher Education Tuition Board runs Texas ABLE. Call 1-844-489-2253, weekdays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time.
More grants for Texas families of children with autism.	Alpaca Health's Texas autism grants guide lists more grants and how to apply, at alpacahealth.io/family-resources/texas-autism-grants .

Find respite, sports and sensory-friendly outings

Call ahead before you go, since schedules change.

☐ Sign up for First Fridays respite at First UMC Arlington

On the first Friday evening of each month in the school year, volunteers care for children with special needs and their siblings at no charge. 313 N. Center St. Call 817-274-2571.

☐ Register for Miracle League DFW baseball

Saturday games for six weeks each spring and fall at Randol Mill Park, 1901 W. Randol Mill Rd., from age 4. Registration is \$40, with scholarships granted automatically. (817) 733-6076.

☐ Try the library's SNAP sensory programs

Arlington Public Library runs Sensory Storytime for ages 2 to 5 and Sensory Art for ages 5 to 10, by registration, and a quiet Kindness Room at 100 S. Center St. Call 817-459-6900.

☐ Visit New Strength Adaptive Fitness

Adapted strength training, gymnastics, martial arts and yoga for anyone who needs adaptive options, including people with autism. 2238 Michigan Ave., Suite B, Arlington. Call 682-800-3153.

☐ Use the sensory room at a Rangers game

At Globe Life Field, ask Guest Services for the Sensory Room across from Section 113, for up to 15 minutes. Sensory bags with headphones and fidgets are at Guest Services behind Section 101.

☐ Apply for Handitran rides

The City of Arlington's door-to-door rides for people 65 and older and people with disabilities. A doctor certifies the application for anyone under 65. It costs \$10 to apply and \$3 for each one-way ride. Call 817-459-5390.

☐ Search Take Time Texas for respite providers

Take Time Texas is the Texas HHS database of licensed respite providers, at taketimetexas.org. The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Tarrant County can also help, at 1-855-937-2372.

Save these crisis numbers now

Put these numbers in your phone before you need them. If anyone has a medical emergency, call 911.

☐ **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**

Call or text 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org, at any hour of any day. Conversations are free and confidential.

☐ **MHMR of Tarrant County ICARE Call Center, 1-800-866-2465**

Call or text at any hour, every day of the year, for mental health or substance use emergency support. MHMR's Mobile Crisis Outreach Team gives face-to-face crisis services at any hour to children, adolescents and adults in Tarrant County. The TTY line is 817-569-4488.

☐ **2-1-1 Texas, for help that is not an emergency**

Dial 2-1-1, or (877) 541-7905, to find state and local services near you.

Your call log

Date	Who I called	Who I spoke to	What they told me	Next step and date

Questions to ask on each call

Write down each answer with the date and the name of the person you spoke to.

☐ **Does my child's diagnosis report meet Texas Medicaid's rules for ABA?**

Ask the evaluator. Texas Medicaid looks for the DSM criteria, the severity level and a standardized diagnostic test, made or reconfirmed within the last 3 years.

☐ **Who will sign the referral for an ABA evaluation?**

Ask your child's primary care provider or the doctor who made the diagnosis.

☐ **Is my child in STAR Kids, and who is our service coordinator?**

Ask your plan. Cook Children's Health Plan is 1-844-843-0004, and Aetna is 844-787-5437.

☐ **On what date did the school district receive my written request?**

The 15 school days start on that date. Once you sign consent, the district has 45 school days to finish the evaluation report.

☐ **Is my child on the HCS and TxHmL lists, and what is our request date?**

Ask MHMR of Tarrant County at 817-569-4140. Names go on the lists first come, first served.

☐ **Is my child on the CLASS, MDCP and DBMD lists?**

Call Texas HHS at 1-877-438-5658, and write down the date of your call.

☐ **Does my private plan follow Texas Insurance Code 1355.015?**

Ask your health plan whether it is state-regulated or self-funded, and whether ABA needs approval before it starts.

☐ **What will our family pay each month for ECI?**

Ask ECI how your share is figured on the state sliding fee scale. A child with Medicaid pays ECI nothing that month.

Sources

Sources change over time, so check each one before you act on it.

MHMR of Tarrant County, Early Childhood Intervention (ECI of North Central Texas)

<https://mhmrarrant.org/eci/>

Texas ECI, Paying for Early Childhood Intervention Services (PDF, 2018, linked from the MHMR ECI page)

<https://www.mhmrarrant.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Paying-ECI-Services-English-3-2018.pdf>

Early intervention functions not subject to fees, 34 CFR 303.521, eCFR

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/part-303/section-303.521>

Arlington ISD, Special Education, Child Find

<https://www.aisd.net/district/departments/academic-services/specialized-learning-services/special-education/child-find/>

Mansfield ISD, About MISD (areas the district serves)

<https://www.mansfieldisd.org/about-misd>

Mansfield ISD Special Education, Child Find

<https://sites.google.com/misdmail.net/misd-special-education/child-find/child-find>

Texas Education Agency, Special Education Initial Referral Timeline (PDF, 2024)

https://spedsupport.tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2024-09/special-education-initial-referral-timeline_2024.pdf

Texas Parent to Parent

<https://www.txp2p.org/>

Partners Resource Network, PACT Project

<https://prntexas.org/texas-ptis/pact-project/>

Education Service Center Region 11, public school districts

<https://www.esc11.net/who-we-serve/public-schools>

TMHP, autism services benefits effective February 1, 2022

<https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-07-30-hhsc-release-autism-services-benefits-effective-february-1-2022>

Sources (continued)

TMPPM, Children's Services Handbook, September 2026, sections 2.1 and 2.3 (PDF)

https://www.tmhp.com/sites/default/files/file-library/resources/provider-manuals/tmppm/pdf-chapters/2026/2026-09-september/2_04_childrens_services.pdf

Texas HHS, STAR Kids (archived copy of December 8, 2025)

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/health/medicaid-chip/medicaid-chip-members/star-kids>

Texas HHS Handbooks, STAR Kids plans and member services numbers by service area

<https://fhhb.hhs.texas.gov/handbooks/star-kids-program-support-unit-operational-procedures-handbook/appendix-xxvi-star-kids-plan-codes>

Cook Children's Health Plan, STAR Kids members

<https://www.cookchp.org/members/star-kids/>

Your Texas Benefits, apply for benefits (archived copy of September 15, 2026)

<https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/Learn/Home>

Texas Insurance Code, sections 1355.002 and 1355.015 (archived copy of December 11, 2025)

<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/IN/htm/IN.1355.htm>

Texas Department of Insurance, health care coverage guide (archived copy of August 7, 2026)

<https://www.tdi.texas.gov/pubs/consumer/cb005.html>

MHMR of Tarrant County, IDD services and interest lists

<https://mhmtarrant.org/idd-disability-services/>

The Arc of Texas, Medicaid waivers

<https://www.thearcoftexas.org/resources/medicaid-waivers/>

Texas HHS, Children's Autism Program (archived copy of July 31, 2026)

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/childrens-autism-program>

Cook Children's, Child Study Center, Fort Worth location

<https://www.cookchildrens.org/services/child-study-center/contact-us/child-study-center-fw/>

Sources (continued)

Cook Children's, Child Study Center, appointments and referrals

<https://www.cookchildrens.org/services/child-study-center/appointments-referrals/>

SPEDTex, Parent-Directed Special Education Services (PDSES)

<https://spedtex.org/resources/pdses>

Social Security Administration, SSI for children, 2026 edition

<https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-child-ussi.htm>

Social Security Administration, contact by phone

<https://www.ssa.gov/agency/contact/phone.html>

Texas ABLE, expanded eligibility in 2026

<https://www.texasable.org/expanded-able-eligibility/>

Texas ABLE, contact

<https://www.texasable.org/contact-us/>

First United Methodist Church of Arlington, special needs ministries and First Fridays

<https://www.firstumcarlington.org/special-needs>

Miracle League DFW, registration questions

<https://www.miracleleaguedfw.com/faqs/>

Arlington Public Library, SNAP Sensory Program

<https://arlingtonlibrary.org/snap>

Arlington Public Library, locations and hours

<https://arlingtonlibrary.org/locations>

New Strength Adaptive Fitness

<https://www.newstrengthgym.com/>

Sources (continued)

Texas Rangers, Globe Life Field disability access guide

<https://www.mlb.com/rangers/ballpark/disability-access-guide>

City of Arlington, Handitran

<https://www.arlingtontx.gov/City-Services/Transportation-Streets-Traffic/Handitran>

Navigate Life Texas (Texas HHSC), respite care for children with disabilities

<https://www.navigatelifetexas.org/en/family-support/respite-care-for-children-with-disabilities>

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

<https://988lifeline.org/>

MHMR of Tarrant County, crisis services

<https://mhmtarrant.org/crisis-services/>

Alpaca Health, insurance

<https://www.alpacahealth.io/insurance>

Alpaca Health, ABA therapy in Texas

<https://www.alpacahealth.io/states/texas>

Alpaca Health, ABA therapy in Arlington

<https://www.alpacahealth.io/cities/arlington>

This kit is general information and is not medical or legal advice. Talk to a qualified professional about your child's situation.

Start ABA therapy in Arlington with Alpaca Health

Alpaca Health accepts Texas Medicaid and private insurance plans. It matches Arlington families with an independent Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), and it handles the insurance paperwork, from checking your child's coverage to sending claims after each session.



When you are ready

Start with Alpaca Health →

<https://secure.alpacahealth.io/signup>



Scan to open

Read the Texas Medicaid waivers guide <https://www.alpacahealth.io/family-resources/texas-medicaid-waivers-your-guide-to-approval>