

Charlotte **First 90 Days After** an Autism Diagnosis Checklist



Get matched with a BCBA
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Gather the paperwork in week 1

Therapy providers, health plans, schools and grant 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**

Ask for the complete report, with the diagnosis and the name of each test used. NC Medicaid covers autism therapy for children under 21 diagnosed with a scientifically validated tool.

☐ **The date of a provisional diagnosis, if your child is under 3**

NC Medicaid accepts a provisional autism diagnosis to start therapy for a child under 3. The full diagnosis should follow within six months, so put that date on your calendar.

☐ **A copy of your child's insurance or NC Medicaid card, and your photo ID**

Photograph both sides of the card. UNC TEACCH will not schedule an evaluation until it has a copy of the insurance card and a photo ID for the parent or guardian.

☐ **A written referral to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, if your child is 3 or older**

NC policy asks you to write why you are referring your child, your concerns, and your child's strengths and needs. Give it to the principal, a teacher, or the Exceptional Children office at ec@cms.k12.nc.us, and keep a dated copy. If you ask by phone, the school has to help you write it.

☐ **School records and earlier evaluations**

UNC TEACCH asks for recent IEPs, school testing, CDSA evaluations and therapy notes. ESA+ accepts only an Eligibility Determination from an NC public school issued in the last three years.

☐ **A service order for NC Medicaid therapy**

A medical doctor, osteopathic doctor or licensed psychologist signs it on or before the first day of NC Medicaid autism therapy. Each order lasts one year, so ask who will sign it.

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

NC Medicaid and Alliance Health send decisions by mail. NC Medicaid tells families to save the letter that confirms a child is on the NC Innovations waitlist, because you may need it later.

Make the first calls in week 1

Who to call	What they do	How to reach them
Autism Society of North Carolina, Autism Resource Specialists. Any age.	Specialists who are all parents of people with autism help families in every NC county with early intervention, school and community services.	Use the Talk with a Specialist form at autismsociety-nc.org , or call 800-442-2762. Ask for a Spanish-speaking specialist on the form.
CDSA of Mecklenburg County, NC Infant-Toddler Program. Under 3.	Evaluates your child and coordinates early intervention. Federal rules bar fees for both, and NC lists autism as a condition that can qualify a child.	704-336-7100. Valerie C. Woodard Center, 3205 Freedom Drive, Suite 7500, Charlotte, NC 28208. You can refer your own child by phone.
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Exceptional Children. Ages 3 to 21.	Evaluates for special education. NC policy gives the school 90 days from receiving your written referral to evaluate, decide eligibility and put an IEP in place.	Email ec@cms.k12.nc.us or call 980-343-6960. For a preschool child, call the preschool intake line at 980-343-2720.
Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC). Birth to 26.	North Carolina's Parent Training and Information Center. It helps parents with special education at no cost to families.	800-962-6817

Outside Mecklenburg County, the Concord CDSA (704-998-5730) serves Cabarrus, Iredell, Rowan, Stanly and Union counties, and the Shelby CDSA (980-552-4610) serves Cleveland, Gaston, Lincoln, Polk and Rutherford counties. For a child 3 or older, call the school district in your county.

Set up how therapy gets paid for

Start with the coverage your child has now, and put your child on the NC Innovations waitlist this month, because NC Medicaid says the wait is long.

☐ Learn what EPSDT means for a child on NC Medicaid

EPSDT stands for Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment. It is the Medicaid benefit for everyone under 21. It has to cover treatment a licensed practitioner orders that is medically necessary to correct or improve a health condition, within the federal Medicaid categories, even when the NC Medicaid state plan does not list the service. Children under 21 pay no copay, and many services need approval in advance.

☐ Know that NC Medicaid covers autism therapy for children under 21

NC Medicaid Clinical Coverage Policy 8F covers research-based behavioral health treatment for autism, which the policy lets Board Certified Behavior Analysts provide, for children under 21 with an autism diagnosis.

☐ Find out whether your child belongs on a Tailored Plan

Tailored Plans are NC Medicaid plans for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities and other complex needs, and Alliance Health runs the Tailored Plan for Mecklenburg County. Eligibility is reviewed automatically and the plan mails you a letter, and you can also ask to move to a Tailored Plan. Alliance Health member services is 1-800-510-9132, Monday through Saturday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

☐ If your child does not have NC Medicaid yet, apply at any time of year

Apply online through ePASS, in person at your county Department of Social Services, or by phone. NC Medicaid suggests applying even if you are not sure your child is eligible. The NC Medicaid Contact Center is 1-888-245-0179.

☐ If you have private insurance, ask whether your plan follows the NC autism coverage law

North Carolina law G.S. 58-3-192 requires the health plans it covers to pay for autism screening, diagnosis and treatment, including adaptive behavior treatment, which a Board Certified Behavior Analyst can provide or supervise. Those plans may cap adaptive behavior treatment at a yearly amount that started at \$40,000 and is adjusted for inflation, and may limit it to children 18 and younger. The law does not reach every plan, so ask yours whether it applies.

Set up how therapy gets paid for (continued)

☐ Join the NC Innovations waiver waitlist through Alliance Health

The Innovations waiver pays for home and community services for children and adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities, including autism. Anyone can apply at any age or income, and NC Medicaid says to apply as soon as you have a diagnosis. Call Alliance Health at 1-800-510-9132 and ask to apply. Staff may still call it the Registry of Unmet Needs.

☐ Ask Alliance Health about 1915(i) services while you wait

For a child with NC Medicaid, 1915(i) services can help with daily activities and give caregivers a break while your child is on the Innovations waitlist, and your place on the waitlist stays the same. They come through Tailored Plans, some children on NC Medicaid Direct can get them too, and Standard Plans do not offer them.

☐ Keep your phone number and address current with Alliance Health

Alliance Health contacts you by phone and mail when an Innovations slot opens. Tell them if you move or if your child's needs increase, since a limited number of reserved slots go to people with extraordinary circumstances.

☐ Call the NC Medicaid Ombudsman if a plan problem stays stuck

The Ombudsman helps when your LME/MCO or health plan has not solved a problem. Call 1-877-201-3750, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Families in Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln and Union counties have Partners Health Management as their LME/MCO, at 1-888-235-4673.

Get a full evaluation if you still need one

Where	How to get an appointment	Cost and contact
CDSA of Mecklenburg County. Under 3.	Refer your own child by phone, letter, fax or in person.	Federal rules bar fees for the evaluation. 704-336-7100.
UNC TEACCH Charlotte Center. Children and adults.	Send a Professional Referral Form from a professional who knows your child, a history form, a copy of the insurance card and a parent photo ID. TEACCH cannot schedule without all four.	Fee for service, with the same insurance plans as UNC Health Care. 8401 University Executive Park Drive, Suite 100, Charlotte, NC 28262. 919-445-2365, Spanish 919-445-0349.
Atrium Health Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics of the Carolinas. Children.	Get a referral from your child's primary care provider in North or South Carolina, complete the CHADIS questionnaires with your child's teacher, then call to schedule.	2608 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204. 704-403-2626.
Novant Health Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, Eastover. Birth to 18.	Call and ask what the clinic needs before it books an evaluation.	2711 Randolph Road, Suite 100, Charlotte, NC 28207. 704-384-0567.

Ask each clinic whether it takes your child's plan and how long the current wait is. If your child under 3 has a provisional diagnosis, NC Medicaid expects the full diagnosis within six months of it, so book the evaluation now.

Apply for grants and education money

Program and when to apply	What it pays for and who can apply
Autism Strong N.E.E.D. grant. Listed as open in September 2026.	Starting therapy for the first time, an expert autism diagnosis, education advocacy, and past-due therapy bills. Needs an autism diagnosis or a referral for one.
Autism Strong CampStrong grant. Listed as open in September 2026.	Summer, holiday and overnight camps for children with autism, paid directly to the camp.
Autism Strong Angels 4 Autism. Applications open October 1, 2026.	A therapy tablet with learning and communication programs, given at the holidays to Charlotte-area families with limited resources.
Autism Strong Landon's Hope Scholarship. Applications open November 16, 2026, and awardees hear in December.	Therapy hours for the following calendar year, for families who cannot afford therapy.

Apply for grants and education money (continued)

Program and when to apply	What it pays for and who can apply
ESA+ scholarship, NC State Education Assistance Authority. The 2027 to 2028 application opens the first Monday in February 2027. 855-330-3955.	Private school tuition, home school costs and approved services such as speech therapy. The base award is \$9,000 a year, and a student with autism as the primary or secondary disability may qualify for \$17,000. Needs an Eligibility Determination from an NC public school, and age 5 by August 31 or 4 by April 16 with approval for kindergarten. Funding is limited, and early applications go into a lottery. NCSEAA notes that a parent who places a child in private school gives up the special education services the public school would provide.
NC Lifespan Respite. Only when funds are available.	Up to \$750 a calendar year for respite from a worker you choose. For NC caregivers 18 or older giving unpaid care who get no ongoing publicly funded in-home or respite services, and families on a waitlist for those services can apply. A local professional organization has to refer you and fill out the application.
SSI, Supplemental Security Income. Apply at ssa.gov or call 1-800-772-1213, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.	A monthly payment for a child under 18 whose condition causes marked and severe functional limits expected to last at least 12 months. For families with limited income and resources, and Social Security counts part of the parents' income and resources.

Autism Strong allows one grant per child per calendar year, to families who live and get services in its counties. Near Charlotte those are Mecklenburg, Union, Gaston, Cabarrus, Iredell, Lincoln, Alexander, Catawba, Cleveland, Rowan and Stanly, plus York, Lancaster, Chester and Chesterfield in South Carolina. Apply at autismstrong.org/apply or call 704-981-2740.

Find sensory-friendly outings and recreation

These Charlotte programs are set up for children with sensory needs or disabilities. Call ahead before you go, since schedules change.

☐ Book a Therapeutic Recreation assessment with Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation

The county runs Therapeutic Recreation programs for youth, teens and adults with disabilities, and each participant needs an assessment every year. Call the TR Info Line at 980-314-1192 or email TRInfo@MeckNC.gov to set one up.

☐ Visit ImaginOn during its Monday sensory-friendly hour

ImaginOn, part of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library at 300 East Seventh St., holds a sensory-friendly hour on Mondays from 9 to 10 a.m. Staff soften the lighting when they can and lend noise-cancelling headphones and fidgets. Call (704) 416-4600.

☐ Go to the autism storytime at ImaginOn

The storytime is for children up to age 11 on the autism spectrum or with other sensory needs. It meets at 6:30 p.m. on the first Monday and the third Thursday of each month, with no registration and a cap of 40 people.

☐ Look for adapted children's programs at other library branches

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library lists adapted children's programs across its branches on its events calendar. ImaginOn also posts a social story that shows a child what a library visit looks like.

☐ Plan a morning at Discovery Place Science during its sensory-friendly hours

Once a month the museum opens early, before general admission, with lower lights, less sound, quiet spaces and sensory supplies, included with admission. The next date listed is October 11, 2026. Call 704.286.8302.

Save these crisis numbers now

Put these numbers in your phone before you need them. If anyone is in danger or needs emergency medical care, 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.

☐ **Alliance Health Behavioral Health Crisis Line, 877-223-4617**

The line is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A clinician decides whether to send a mobile crisis team. Alliance Health oversees mobile crisis teams in Mecklenburg County and says it has a mobile team for children and youth.

☐ **NC START West, 888-974-2937**

NC START offers crisis prevention and response for people 6 and older with intellectual or developmental disabilities and complex behavioral or mental health needs. NC START West covers Mecklenburg County. Call to learn how the program can help before a crisis happens.

☐ **Smith Family Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center, 616 Colonnade Drive, Charlotte**

Alliance Health lists this walk-in center as open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call Alliance Health at 1-800-510-9132 to ask whether it sees children your child's age.

☐ **Partners Health Management crisis line, 833-353-2093, for nearby counties**

Partners Health Management is the LME/MCO for Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln and Union counties, and this is its crisis line.

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 NC Medicaid's rules for autism therapy?**

Ask the evaluator or the therapy provider. NC Medicaid covers autism therapy when a scientifically validated diagnostic tool was used.

☐ **Is my child on a Standard Plan, a Tailored Plan, or NC Medicaid Direct?**

Call the NC Medicaid Enrollment Broker at 1-833-870-5500, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Standard Plans do not offer 1915(i) services, so the answer matters for your child.

☐ **Does my private plan follow G.S. 58-3-192, and what cap and age limit does it set?**

Ask your health plan, and ask whether autism therapy needs approval before it starts.

☐ **When will the CDSA evaluate my child, and who will be our service coordinator?**

Ask the CDSA of Mecklenburg County at 704-336-7100. Federal rules bar fees for service coordination.

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

Under NC policy, the 90 days start when the school receives your written referral. Write the date in your log.

☐ **Is my child on the NC Innovations waitlist, and what is our application date?**

Each county keeps its own waitlist, and people who have waited longest are usually served first. NC Medicaid says an LME/MCO cannot predict an exact wait time.

☐ **Can my child get 1915(i) services while we wait?**

Ask Alliance Health at 1-800-510-9132.

☐ **Does this clinic take my child's plan, and how long is the current wait for an evaluation?**

Ask UNC TEACCH, Atrium Health and Novant Health, and compare the answers in your log.

Sources

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

Autism Society of North Carolina, Talk with a Specialist

<https://www.autismsociety-nc.org/talk-with-a-specialist/>

NCDHHS, NC Infant-Toddler Program, Children's Developmental Services Agency directory

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/child-and-family-well-being/north-carolina-infant-toddler-program-nc-itp/nc-itp-children-s-developmental-services-agency-directory>

NCDHHS, NC Infant-Toddler Program, information for families

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/child-and-family-well-being/north-carolina-infant-toddler-program-nc-itp/families>

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

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

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Child Find and accessing Exceptional Children services

<https://www.cmsk12.org/learning-teaching/exceptional-children/ec-services-in-cms/child-find-accessing-ec-services>

NC Department of Public Instruction, Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities (revised March 2021), NC 1503-2.1 and 1503-2.2

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/exceptional-children/policies-procedures>

Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC)

<https://www.ecac-parentcenter.org/>

NC Medicaid, wellness visits and EPSDT diagnostic and treatment services

<https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/epsdt>

NC Medicaid, EPSDT policy description (revised December 13, 2024)

<https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/documents/files/epsdt-policy-description/open>

NC Medicaid, Clinical Coverage Policy 8F, Research-Based Behavioral Health Treatment for Autism Spectrum Disorder

<https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/documents/files/8f/open>

Sources (continued)

NC Medicaid, Behavioral Health and Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Tailored Plans

<https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/tailored-plans>

NCDHHS, LME/MCO directory

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/providers/lme-mco-directory>

NC Medicaid, apply for Medicaid

<https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/apply>

North Carolina General Statutes, G.S. 58-3-192, coverage for autism spectrum disorder

https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/BySection/Chapter_58/GS_58-3-192.html

NC Medicaid, NC Innovations waiver

<https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/beneficiaries/nc-innovations-waiver>

NC Medicaid, how to apply for the NC Innovations waiver

<https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/beneficiaries/nc-innovations-waiver/how-apply-nc-innovations-waiver>

NC Medicaid, about the NC Innovations waiver waitlist

<https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/beneficiaries/nc-innovations-waiver/about-nc-innovations-waiver-waitlist>

NC Medicaid, 1915(i) services

<https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/beneficiaries/1915i>

UNC TEACCH Autism Program, Charlotte Center

<https://teacch.com/regional-centers/charlotte/>

UNC TEACCH Autism Program, referral information for diagnostic evaluation

<https://teacch.com/clinical-services/referral-info-dx-eval/>

Sources (continued)

UNC TEACCH Autism Program, clinical services and fee for service

<https://teacch.com/clinical-services/>

Atrium Health, Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics of the Carolinas, Charlotte

<https://atriumhealth.org/medical-services/childrens-services/locations/detail/developmental-and-behavioral-pediatrics-of-the-carolinas-charlotte>

Novant Health, Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, Eastover

<https://www.novanthealth.org/locations/clinics/developmental-behavioral-pediatrics-eastover/>

Autism Strong Foundation, apply for financial support

<https://autismstrong.org/apply/>

NC State Education Assistance Authority, Education Student Accounts (ESA+)

<https://k12.ncseaa.edu/the-education-student-accounts/>

NCSEAA, K12 programs eligibility requirements, updated for 2026 to 2027 (PDF)

<https://k12.ncseaa.edu/media/1svdoprl/k12-eligibility-requirements.pdf>

NCSEAA, ESA+ documentation of a disability

<https://k12.ncseaa.edu/the-education-student-accounts/documentation-of-a-disability/>

NCSEAA, how to apply for ESA+

<https://k12.ncseaa.edu/the-education-student-accounts/how-to-apply/>

NCDHHS, NC Lifespan Respite Program

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/aging/nc-lifespan-respite-program>

Social Security Administration, SSI for children, 2026 edition

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

Sources (continued)

Social Security Administration, contact by phone

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

Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation, Therapeutic and Inclusive Recreation Services

<https://parkandrec.mecknc.gov/Activities/therapeutic-recreation-activities>

ImaginOn, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, sensory friendly experiences

<https://www.imaginon.org/sensory-friendly-experiences-imaginon>

Discovery Place Science, accessibility and sensory

<https://discoveryplace.org/visit/accessibility>

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

<https://988lifeline.org/>

Alliance Health, crisis services, including NC START and the Smith Family Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center

<https://www.alliancehealthplan.org/tp-members/accessing-bh-i-dd-tailored-plan-services/crisis-services/>

Alpaca Health, insurance

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

Alpaca Health, ABA therapy in North Carolina

<https://www.alpacahealth.io/states/north-carolina>

Alpaca Health, ABA therapy in Charlotte

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

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 Charlotte with Alpaca Health

Alpaca Health accepts NC Medicaid and private insurance plans. It matches Charlotte 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 NC Medicaid ABA guide <https://www.alpacahealth.io/family-resources/nc-medicaid-aba-therapy-coverage>