

El Paso **First 90 Days** After an Autism Diagnosis Checklist



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Gather the paperwork in week 1

Health plans, evaluators, 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**

Texas Medicaid looks for the DSM criteria, the severity level and the name of the standardized test used, such as the ADOS. The diagnosis has to be made or reconfirmed within 3 years of when ABA starts.

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

Texas Medicaid needs a signed, dated referral before any ABA evaluation or therapy. Your child's primary care provider or the diagnosing doctor can write it.

- ☐ **Copies of ECI, school and therapy reports**

Keep one set for the evaluator and one for the school district. Before a child in ECI turns 3, ECI helps plan the move to school services. Ysleta ISD holds a transition meeting 90 days before the third birthday, and you give consent for ECI to share records.

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

Give it to your campus principal or the district's special education director, and keep a dated copy. A request made only by phone or in person does not start the 15 school day clock.

- ☐ **Papers for a Medicaid or CHIP 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 property, and the bills you pay.

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

Ask for an email confirmation or a mailed letter each time you add your child to a waiver interest list, and keep it here. Health plans and the waiver programs also contact families by mail.

Make the first calls in week 1

Who to call and how	What they do
Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), under 3. Call the El Paso ECI referral line at 915-534-4324.	Checks your child's development and coaches your family at home if your child qualifies. The evaluation costs nothing. Later services use a sliding fee based on family size and income, and no family is turned away because it cannot pay. No diagnosis is needed to refer.
Your school district, ages 3 to 21. El Paso ISD Child Find is 915-230-2825. Ysleta ISD Special Education is 915-434-0900. Socorro ISD Special Education is 915-937-1800.	Evaluates whether your child qualifies for special education, including for autism. The district has 15 school days to answer a written request and 45 school days from your signed consent to finish the evaluation.
Emergence Health Network, the local IDD authority for El Paso County. Its HCS and Texas Home Living line is 915-599-6645.	Puts your child on the HCS and Texas Home Living waiver interest lists and handles Community First Choice. For general information and appointments, call 915-242-0555.
Texas Parent to Parent, for families of children and adults with disabilities. Call 866-896-6001.	Its staff are parents of children with disabilities. Ask to be matched with a trained peer parent mentor, and join its weekly Zoom support calls in English or Spanish.
PEN Project, Partners Resource Network, for ages 0 to 26. Call 1-833-847-2686.	A federally funded parent center for Education Service Center Region 19, which includes El Paso. It explains special education rights at no cost to parents and puts you in touch with the Region 19 coordinator.

If you live outside El Paso County, call the Texas HHS Office of the Ombudsman at 1-877-787-8999 and choose option 3 to find the ECI program for your ZIP code.

Set up how therapy gets paid for

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

☐ Know that Texas Medicaid covers ABA for children under 21

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

☐ Learn what EPSDT means for your child

EPSDT, short for Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment, is called Texas Health Steps and covers Medicaid members from birth through age 20. Federal law requires Texas Medicaid to pay for medically necessary treatment for a child, even if the state plan does not list it.

☐ Find out whether your child belongs in STAR Kids

STAR Kids is the Texas Medicaid program for children and youth 20 and younger with disabilities. A child on Medicaid is enrolled if the child also gets SSI or is in a waiver such as MDCP, CLASS, HCS or Texas Home Living, and every member gets a service coordinator.

☐ Save your health plan's member services number

Superior HealthPlan (844-590-4883) and Wellpoint (844-756-4600) are the STAR Kids plans for El Paso and Hudspeth counties. El Paso Health, the local STAR and CHIP plan, is 915-532-3778 and lists Medicaid ABA for members 20 or younger with an autism diagnosis.

☐ 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 it also checks whether your child can get CHIP, the program for families who earn too much for Children's Medicaid.

☐ If you have private insurance, ask whether the Texas autism law applies

Texas Insurance Code section 1355.015 covers group health plans that Texas regulates. They must pay for treatment your child's primary care doctor prescribes, which can include ABA, speech, occupational and physical therapy, when the diagnosis was made before age 10. From age 10, a plan may cap ABA at \$36,000 a year, and deductibles and copays can still apply. Texas does not regulate self-funded employer plans. The TDI help line is 800-252-3439.

Join the waiver interest lists now

Each Texas Medicaid waiver has its own interest list. The Arc of Texas says you do not have to prove your child qualifies to join one.

- ☐ **Call Emergence Health Network at 915-599-6645 for HCS and Texas Home Living**

Emergence Health Network is the local IDD authority for El Paso County. These two waivers serve children and adults with an intellectual disability or a related condition.

- ☐ **Call Texas HHS at 1-877-438-5658 for CLASS, DBMD and MDCP**

CLASS is for a related condition that began before age 22, DBMD is for deaf-blindness with another disability, and MDCP is for medically fragile children 20 and younger.

- ☐ **Join every list that might fit, and keep your contact details current**

The Arc of Texas says some waivers have waits of as much as 16 years. If a program cannot reach you when a spot opens, your child can be dropped, so call each list once a year to update your details and ask where your child stands.

- ☐ **Ask Emergence Health Network about Community First Choice while you wait**

It helps with daily activities such as dressing, bathing and eating for people on Medicaid who need an institutional level of care. People on an interest list may qualify while they wait.

- ☐ **Ask 2-1-1 about the HHS Children's Autism Program for ages 3 to 15**

Texas HHS pays local agencies for focused ABA for children with an autism diagnosis, up to 180 hours in 12 months, with parent training included. Families of all incomes can apply, and the agency explains any cost. Ask whether an agency serves El Paso County.

- ☐ **Read the full steps in the Texas Medicaid waivers guide**

Alpaca Health's guide covers the six Texas waivers and how to apply, and it is linked on the last page.

Get a full evaluation if needed

Where and how to reach them	How to start
Your child's pediatrician, for any age. Call your child's doctor's office.	Ask for a referral for an autism evaluation. Texas Medicaid accepts a diagnosis from a developmental pediatrician, neurologist, psychiatrist, licensed psychologist or diagnostic team.
Your health plan. Call the member services number on your child's card.	Ask member services, or your STAR Kids service coordinator, for evaluators in the plan's network.
ECI, under 3. Call the referral line at 915-534-4324.	ECI evaluates your child's development to see whether your child qualifies for early intervention. The evaluation costs nothing.
Your school district, ages 3 to 21. Call El Paso ISD at 915-230-2825, Ysleta ISD at 915-434-0900 or Socorro ISD at 915-937-1800.	A written request starts a full evaluation for special education. For Texas Medicaid ABA, the diagnosis still has to come from one of the providers in the first row.
Alpaca Health, children of all ages. alpacahealth.io/autism-evaluation	Alpaca Health offers ADOS-2 autism evaluations covered by insurance and checks your coverage before anything is scheduled. Ask whether an evaluation can be scheduled where you live.

Bring the reports you already have, your child's Medicaid or insurance card, and notes on what you have seen at home and at school. Ask each evaluator whether it takes your child's plan, how long the current wait is, and whether the report will include the DSM criteria, severity level and test name that Texas Medicaid looks for.

Apply for grants and money

Program and who can apply	What it pays for and how to apply
PDSES, Parent-Directed Special Education Services, from the Texas Education Agency. Texas public school students, Pre-K to 12th grade, with an IEP.	A one-time \$1,500 account for learning materials and services such as extra speech therapy or tutoring, first-come, first-served. Call SPEDTex at 1-855-773-3839 or join the 2026 to 2027 email list at spedtex.org .
SSI, Supplemental Security Income. Apply at ssa.gov or call 1-800-772-1213, weekdays 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. local time.	A monthly payment for a child under 18 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. Texas puts children on SSI and Medicaid in STAR Kids.
Texas ABLE, a savings account for a Texan whose disability began before age 46. The age limit was 26 until January 1, 2026.	Anyone can add money, up to \$20,000 in total for 2026, for disability expenses. SSI does not count the first \$100,000 in an ABLE account. Open an account at texasable.org .
More grants for Texas families.	Alpaca Health's Texas autism grants guide lists more Texas and national grants and how to apply. It is linked in the References.

Find outings, support and respite

These programs serve El Paso families of children with disabilities or sensory needs. Call ahead before you go, since schedules change.

☐ Ask Take Time Texas about respite care

Take Time Texas is the Texas HHS respite program for family members who care for a person of any age with a disability or chronic health condition. Call 855-937-2372.

☐ Join an Autism Society of Texas group in El Paso

The El Paso chapter runs free monthly groups for caregivers and for autistic adults. RSVP for the time and place at 915-284-8201 ext. 6684 or elpaso@texasautismsociety.org.

☐ Borrow a sensory bag at the El Paso Zoo

After you buy tickets, borrow a KultureCity sensory bag with headphones and fidget tools at the Gift Shop. Call 915-212-0966 to confirm the next monthly sensory-inclusive Sunday.

☐ Check out a sensory kit at La Nube, 201 W. Main Drive

Bring your ID to borrow a Sensory Kit backpack and noise-canceling headphones for free on the first floor. Call 915-290-4111 for the weekend sensory-friendly lighting hours.

☐ Go to Sensory Zone at the Esperanza Acosta Moreno Library

The library holds it on Mondays from 10 to 11 a.m. through December 31, 2026, at 12480 Pebble Hills Blvd. It uses dim lighting and takes up to 15 people.

☐ Ask Special Olympics Texas, Area 19 El Paso, about sports

Special Olympics serves athletes with intellectual disabilities from age 8, and its Young Athletes program brings children 2 to 7 into sports play. Use the Contact tab on the Area 19 page at sotx.org.

☐ For a teen, ask Workforce Solutions Borderplex about Vocational Rehabilitation

The state-funded program helps people with disabilities prepare for, find and keep jobs, at no charge. Call 915-887-2159.

Save these crisis numbers now

Put these numbers in your phone before you need them. If anyone is in physical danger, 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, and text and chat are available in Spanish.

☐ Emergence Health Network 24-hour crisis hotline, 915-779-1800

Emergence Health Network runs crisis and emergency services for El Paso at any hour, every day of the week. The toll-free crisis number is 1-877-562-6467, and you can also go to its location at 1601 E. Yandell.

☐ Emergence Health Network crisis help for a person with an intellectual or developmental disability

This team works with people who have an intellectual or developmental disability and serious behavioral or psychiatric needs. It gives an immediate assessment, helps calm the situation and links the person to services, at any hour. Call the crisis hotline at 915-779-1800.

☐ Emergence Health Network training for families

Emergence Health Network trains families, law enforcement and community partners on how to respond to and support a person with an intellectual or developmental disability. Call 915-242-0555 and ask about the next training.

Get help in Spanish

Each of these programs offers help in Spanish. Cada uno de estos programas ofrece ayuda en español.

☐ **Avancemos Juntos Texas, the Spanish edition of Navigate Life Texas**

Texas HHS runs this site for families of children with disabilities. Start with the page called Mi hijo tiene un diagnóstico, ¿por dónde empiezo? at navigatelifetexas.org/es.

☐ **Autism Society of Texas, El Paso Spanish-Language Support Group**

A free monthly group for Spanish-speaking families and individuals. To RSVP and get the time and place, call 915-284-8201 ext. 6684 or email elpaso@texasautismsociety.org.

☐ **Texas Parent to Parent Zoom support calls in Spanish**

Texas Parent to Parent staff lead a support call in Spanish every Monday. Register on the Texas Parent to Parent home page, txp2p.org, or call 866-896-6001.

☐ **PEN Project Region 19 coordinator, 915-494-3925**

The PEN coordinator for El Paso's region speaks Spanish and helps with your child's special education rights at no cost. Email penregion19@prntexas.org. The PEN office in El Paso, 915-259-8717, also has Spanish-speaking staff.

☐ **An interpreter when you call or visit**

SPEDTex answers special education questions at 1-855-773-3839, and its website is in English and Spanish. For translation help at Emergence Health Network, ask when you call 915-242-0555 to schedule.

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. Texas Medicaid needs a signed and dated referral.

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

Call your plan's member services line, 844-590-4883 for Superior HealthPlan or 844-756-4600 for Wellpoint.

☐ **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.

☐ **Is my child on the HCS and Texas Home Living interest lists, and what is our request date?**

Ask Emergence Health Network at 915-599-6645, and ask for a letter or email that confirms it.

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

Ask Texas HHS at 1-877-438-5658, or check the Interest List Manager at YourTexasBenefits.com.

☐ **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.

☐ **Does this evaluator take my child's plan, and how long is the current wait?**

Ask each evaluator you call, and compare the answers in your log.

Sources

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

Texas HHS, Early Childhood Intervention services (Internet Archive copy, July 31, 2026)

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services>

Texas HHS, Make a referral to ECI (Internet Archive copy, October 31, 2025)

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services/make-a-referral-eci>

Region 19 Education Service Center, Early Childhood Intervention and the local ECI referral line

<https://www.esc19.net/programs/early-childhood-intervention-eci>

El Paso ISD, Special Education and Child Find

<https://www.episd.org/o/episd/page/special-education>

Ysleta ISD, Child Find

<https://www.yisd.net/o/yisd/page/child-find>

Socorro ISD, Special Education and Child Find

<https://www.sisd.net/page/special-education>

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

Emergence Health Network, IDD services, Community First Choice and IDD crisis help

<https://emergencehealthnetwork.org/developmental-disabilities/>

Emergence Health Network, crisis hotline and translation services

<https://emergencehealthnetwork.org/>

Texas HHS, directory of local IDD authorities (LIDDA)

<https://resources.hhs.texas.gov/directories/lidda>

Texas Parent to Parent, peer parent mentors and weekly Zoom support calls

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

Partners Resource Network, PEN Project

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

Sources (continued)

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>

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 (Internet Archive copy, 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>

El Paso Health, autism, Medicaid ABA and member services (Internet Archive copy, June 7, 2026)

<https://www.elpasohealth.com/members/autism-spectrum-disorder.html>

Texas HHS, Medicaid and CHIP for children (Internet Archive copy, September 3, 2026)

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/health/medicaid-chip/medicaid-chip-programs-services/programs-children-adults-disabilities/programs-children-families>

Your Texas Benefits, apply for Medicaid and CHIP (Internet Archive copy, September 15, 2026)

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

Texas Insurance Code, sections 1355.002 and 1355.015 (Internet Archive copy, December 11, 2025)

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

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

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

Navigate Life Texas (Texas HHS), Texas Medicaid waiver programs for children with disabilities

<https://www.navigatelifetexas.org/en/insurance-financial-help/texas-medicaid-waiver-programs-for-children-with-disabilities>

The Arc of Texas, Medicaid waivers

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

Texas HHS, Children's Autism Program (Internet Archive copy, February 9, 2026)

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

Sources (continued)

Texas HHS, Children's Autism Program fact sheet (PDF, Internet Archive copy, October 31, 2025)

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/autism/childrens-autism-fact-sheet.pdf>

Alpaca Health, autism evaluation

<https://www.alpacahealth.io/autism-evaluation>

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>

Social Security Administration, spotlight on ABLE accounts, 2026 edition

<https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-able.html>

Texas ABLE Program

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

Alpaca Health, Texas autism grants guide

<https://www.alpacahealth.io/family-resources/texas-autism-grants>

Alpaca Health, Texas Medicaid waivers guide

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

Navigate Life Texas (Texas HHS), Texas Lifespan Respite Care Program, Take Time Texas

<https://www.navigatelifetexas.org/en/services-groups-events/services/the-texas-lifespan-respite-care-program-tlrcp>

Autism Society of Texas, El Paso groups and contact (Internet Archive copy, December 6, 2025)

<https://www.texasautismsociety.org/autism-society-of-texas-el-paso/>

El Paso Zoo, KultureCity certification

<https://www.elpasozoo.org/visit/kulturecity-certification>

Sources (continued)

La Nube, sensory and accessibility

<https://la-nube.org/plan-your-day/accessibility>

City of El Paso events, Sensory Zone at the Esperanza Acosta Moreno Library

<https://events.elpasotexas.gov/event-detail.php?id=1216&date=1778515200>

Special Olympics Texas, Area 19 El Paso (Internet Archive copy, February 4, 2026)

<https://www.sotx.org/area-home?area=2311872>

Special Olympics Texas, Young Athletes (Internet Archive copy, March 4, 2025)

<https://www.sotx.org/young-athletes>

Workforce Solutions Borderplex, jobseekers with disabilities and Vocational Rehabilitation

<https://borderplexjobs.com/jobseekers/jobseekers-with-disabilities>

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

<https://988lifeline.org/>

Avancemos Juntos Texas, Navigate Life Texas in Spanish (Texas HHS)

<https://www.navigatelifetexas.org/es/>

Alpaca Health, insurance

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

Alpaca Health, ABA therapy in Texas

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

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 with Alpaca Health

Alpaca Health accepts Texas Medicaid and private insurance plans. It matches Texas 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. Depending on where you live, therapy happens at home with a local provider or over secure video with a BCBA.



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>