

Texas Autism **First 90 Days** Checklist



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

Gather the paperwork in week 1

Health plans, 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**

Texas Medicaid looks for the DSM criteria, the severity level and the name of the standardized test used, such as the ADOS. A screening checklist like the M-CHAT does not count on its own. For Medicaid ABA, the diagnosis has to be made or reconfirmed within 3 years.

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

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

☐ **Both sides of your child's Medicaid or insurance card**

Take a photo of each side. Your health plan's member services number is on the back of the card.

☐ **Papers for a Medicaid application, if your child does not have Medicaid yet**

Your Texas Benefits asks for each applicant's Social Security number and birth date, citizenship or immigration status, income, 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 to your principal, and keep a dated copy. A request made only by phone or in person does not start the 15 school day clock.

☐ **Earlier evaluations and plans**

Keep any ECI evaluation, the ECI family service plan (IFSP) and any school evaluation report in the same folder as the diagnosis report.

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

When your child is approved for STAR Kids, a packet about choosing a health plan comes in the mail. When your child reaches the top of a waiver interest list, a state office or your local IDD authority contacts you, so keep your address and phone number current with every program.

Make the first calls in week 1

Who to call and how	What they do
Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), birth to 36 months. Use the ECI Program Search at citysearch.hhsc.state.tx.us, or call 877-787-8999, choose a language, then option 3.	Evaluates your child and plans services. The evaluation, service coordination and family service plan cost you nothing. Later services have a sliding-scale family share based on family size and income, and no family is turned away for being unable to pay.
Your school district, ages 3 and up. Send a written request for a special education evaluation to the director of special education or your principal.	The district has 15 school days from your written request to send a consent form or a written refusal, then 45 school days after you consent to finish the evaluation.
Your local IDD authority (LIDDA), any age. Find yours by county at resources.hhs.texas.gov/directories/lidda.	Adds your child to the HCS and TxHmL interest lists, and gives state-funded services to people with an autism diagnosis where they are offered.
Texas Parent to Parent, any age. 866-896-6001.	Staff are parents of children with disabilities. Talk with another parent, and ask about its Care Notebook for your child's records.
Your parent center, birth to 26. PATH 1-800-866-4726 for regions 2 to 6. PACT 1-855-974-1368 for regions 7, 8, 10 and 11. PEN 1-833-847-2686 for regions 9, 12 and 14 to 19. TEAM 1-877-832-8945 for regions 1, 13 and 20.	These are the four federally funded Parent Training and Information Centers in Texas, run by Partners Resource Network. They help you understand your rights under IDEA, the federal special education law, at no cost to parents.

Education service center regions have their centers in Edinburg (1), Corpus Christi (2), Victoria (3), Houston (4), Beaumont (5), Huntsville (6), Kilgore (7), Mount Pleasant (8), Wichita Falls (9), Richardson (10), Fort Worth (11), Waco (12), Austin (13), Abilene (14), San Angelo (15), Amarillo (16), Lubbock (17), Midland (18), El Paso (19) and San Antonio (20). Ask your district which region it is in.

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 and youth 20 and younger

Since February 1, 2022, Texas Medicaid has covered ABA evaluation and treatment for members 20 and younger with an autism diagnosis, through Texas Health Steps. The health plan has to approve each ABA evaluation and treatment plan first, which is called prior authorization.

☐ Learn what EPSDT means for your child

EPSDT stands for Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment, and in Texas it is called Texas Health Steps. It requires Texas Medicaid to pay for medically necessary treatment for members through age 20, even when other Medicaid members cannot get that service.

☐ Find out whether your child belongs in STAR Kids

STAR Kids is the Texas Medicaid health plan program for children and youth 20 and younger with disabilities. A child on Medicaid who also gets SSI, has Medicare or gets waiver services has to be in it, and each member has a service coordinator at the health plan.

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

Apply at YourTexasBenefits.com or call 2-1-1. After you apply online, you can check your status, renew and print a Medicaid card on the same site.

☐ Know that CHIP does not cover the Medicaid autism benefit

The autism benefit is part of Texas Medicaid, and it does not cover children on CHIP. If your child has CHIP, ask 2-1-1 about Medicaid or Medicaid Buy-In for Children.

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

Texas Insurance Code chapter 1355 requires state-regulated group health plans to cover autism treatment your child's primary care doctor prescribes, which can include ABA, speech, occupational and physical therapy, when the diagnosis came before age 10. From age 10, a plan may cap ABA at \$36,000 a year. The Texas Department of Insurance says it does not regulate most health plans, and the state does not regulate self-funded employer plans. TDI's help line is 800-252-3439.

Join the waiver interest lists this month

Program and who it is for	Who takes your call
HCS and TxHmL, for people with an intellectual or developmental disability. TxHmL is for people who live with their family or in their own home.	Your local IDD authority (LIDDA). Find yours by county at resources.hhs.texas.gov/directories/lidda .
CLASS, for a related condition, which Texas defines as a disability other than an intellectual disability that began before age 22 and affects daily life.	The Texas HHS interest list line, 877-438-5658. HHS says local IDD authorities do not handle CLASS.
MDCP, for people 20 and younger with disabilities who would otherwise live in a nursing facility. DBMD, for people who are deaf and blind and have another disability.	The same line, 877-438-5658. Ask for every list your child may qualify for in the same call.
YES Waiver, for children 3 through 18 with serious mental, emotional and behavioral difficulties who are at risk of placement outside the home. Parent income is not counted.	Your local mental health authority. Ask for the YES Waiver inquiry list. Find it by county or ZIP code at resources.hhs.texas.gov/directories/lmha .
Community First Choice, which has no interest list. It pays for help with daily activities, and teaching those skills, for people on Medicaid who meet an institutional level of care.	Your local IDD authority, which does the assessment for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

The Arc of Texas says the wait can be as much as 16 years for some waivers, and you do not have to prove eligibility to join. HHS enrolls people who have waited longest first, and other services do not change your place. The full steps are in Alpaca Health's Texas Medicaid waivers guide at alpacahealth.io/family-resources/texas-medicaid-waivers-your-guide-to-approval.

Check the Children's Autism Program

The HHS Children's Autism Program pays for focused ABA through local community agencies. Focused ABA works on specific behaviors or skills.

☐ **Check that your child is 3 to 15 and has a documented autism diagnosis**

The diagnosis has to come from a qualified professional, and your child has to live in Texas. Services end on the child's 16th birthday.

☐ **Know the hour limits**

The program covers up to 180 hours of treatment in 12 months and up to 720 hours in a child's lifetime.

☐ **Plan for parent training**

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

☐ **Ask what your monthly family share will be**

Families pay a monthly share set by an HHS sliding fee schedule based on family income and family size. If your insurance covers ABA, you pay the lower of that fee or your deductible, copay and coinsurance.

☐ **Ask whether the program near you has an opening**

Openings depend on state funding and on each local program's capacity. When a program cannot take a child right away, it can put the child on its own interest list.

☐ **Call 2-1-1 to find the program near you**

You can also email the HHS Children's Autism Program at Childrens.Autism.Program@hhs.texas.gov or call 512-438-5356, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time.

Get a full evaluation if you still need one

Your child may need a new evaluation if you have only a screening result, or if the report is missing what Texas Medicaid looks for. A Medicaid ABA request also needs a diagnosis made or reconfirmed within 3 years.

☐ Ask your child's primary care provider for a referral

Texas Medicaid accepts an autism diagnosis from a developmental pediatrician, a neurologist, a psychiatrist, a licensed psychologist or a diagnostic team. Ask which of these the doctor can refer you to.

☐ Call your health plan for diagnosing providers in its network

Use the member services number on the back of your child's card. A STAR Kids service coordinator can also help connect your child with providers.

☐ Ask each clinic what its report will include

Texas Medicaid looks for the DSM criteria, the severity level and the name of a standardized diagnostic test before it approves ABA, so ask the clinic whether its report will list each of them.

☐ Ask whether the clinic takes your child's plan and how long the wait is

Write the answers in your call log so you can compare clinics.

☐ Bring the papers from your folder

Bring your child's card, the referral if the clinic asked for one, and any earlier ECI or school evaluations.

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 in Pre-K to 12th grade with an IEP who have never had a PDSES grant.	A one-time \$1,500 online account for learning materials and services such as extra speech therapy or tutoring, first-come, first-served. Join the 2026 to 2027 email list at spedtex.org or call SPEDTex at 1-855-773-3839. Alpaca Health's PDSES guide explains how to apply, at alpacahealth.io/family-resources/pdses-grant-in-texas .
SSI, Supplemental Security Income. A child under 18 whose condition causes marked and severe functional limits expected to last at least 12 months.	A monthly payment. Social Security counts part of the parents' income and resources when it decides whether a child qualifies. Apply at ssa.gov or call 1-800-772-1213, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. local time.
Texas ABLE. Texas residents whose disability began before age 46.	A savings account for disability-related expenses. Texas ABLE expanded eligibility in 2026 to people whose disability began before age 46. Learn more at texasable.org or call 844-489-2253.
More grants for Texas families.	Alpaca Health's Texas autism grants guide lists more Texas and national grants and how to apply, at alpacahealth.io/family-resources/texas-autism-grants .

Set up school support

Texas schools write your child's IEP in an ARD committee meeting. ARD is short for Admission, Review and Dismissal.

- ☐ **Send a written evaluation request and keep a dated copy**

The 15 school days start when the district receives your written request. After you sign consent, the district has 45 school days to finish the evaluation, and you get a copy of the report at least five school days before the first ARD meeting.

- ☐ **Bring the Autism Supplement list to the ARD meeting**

For a student with autism, Texas rules list eleven areas the ARD committee has to consider at least once a year and add to the IEP when needed. All eleven are on the next page.

- ☐ **Ask for the reason in writing if the committee leaves out an area**

If the ARD committee decides your child does not need services in one of the eleven areas, the IEP has to say so and give the reason.

- ☐ **Start planning for life after high school by age 14**

Texas law requires the ARD committee to consider transition planning in the IEP no later than when a student turns 14. That planning can include a referral to a state agency, such as placing your child on a waiting list for public benefits.

- ☐ **Call your parent center before the meeting**

PATH, PACT, PEN and TEAM help parents understand their rights under IDEA and take part in planning their child's services, at no cost to parents. Their phone numbers are in the week 1 calls table.

- ☐ **Ask SPEDTex when you have a special education question**

SPEDTex explains special education rights in Texas and how to prepare for an ARD meeting. Chat with a specialist at spedtex.org or call 1-855-773-3839.

The eleven Autism Supplement areas

Area	What the ARD committee considers
Extended educational programming	Extended day or extended school year services, based on your child's data.
Daily schedules	Schedules with little unstructured time and active learning all day.
In-home and community-based training	Help using social, communication and self-help skills at home and in the community.
Positive behavior support	Behavior strategies and, when needed, a plan based on a functional behavior assessment.
Futures planning	Planning at any age for learning, living, work and community life.
Parent and family training and support	Training from staff with autism experience so you can support skills at home.
Staff-to-student ratio	A ratio that fits each activity and your child's social and behavior progress.
Communication interventions	Ways to communicate across settings, such as augmentative communication.
Social skills supports	Social skills teaching across settings, such as peer-based instruction and video modeling.
Professional educator and staff support	Training so the staff who work with your child use the IEP's methods correctly.
Teaching strategies	Research-based methods such as discrete-trial training, visual supports and ABA.

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.

☐ **Your county's local mental health authority crisis line**

Texas has 37 local mental health authorities and two local behavioral health authorities, and each one serves certain counties. Search by county or ZIP code at resources.hhs.texas.gov/directories/lmha to find yours. Write the crisis number here: _____

☐ **Your local IDD authority crisis line**

The HHS directory at resources.hhs.texas.gov/directories/lidda lists a crisis phone number for each local IDD authority. Write it here: _____

☐ **Disability Rights Texas, for legal help with disability rights**

Disability Rights Texas gives legal help to people with disabilities. It does not handle Social Security applications or appeals of a denial, and it says funding problems mean it is taking fewer cases. Its intake line is 1-800-252-9108, Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m. Central Time. In September 2026 its site said intake was closed during a network disruption, so check disabilityrightstx.org before you call.

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?**

Ask your health plan's member services line, using the number on the back of the card.

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

The 15 school days start on that date. Write it in your call log.

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

Ask your local IDD authority. HHS serves the people who have waited longest first.

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

Ask the Texas HHS interest list line at 877-438-5658, and write down the date of your call.

☐ **Does my private plan follow Texas Insurance Code chapter 1355?**

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

☐ **What would our monthly share be for the Children's Autism Program, and is there an opening?**

Ask the local program that 2-1-1 connects you with. The share depends on your family income and family size.

Sources

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

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>

Texas Medicaid Provider Procedures Manual, 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, Early Childhood Intervention services, with the ECI Program Search link (Internet Archive copy, July 31, 2026)

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

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 HHS, directory of local IDD authorities (LIDDA), with intake and crisis numbers

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

Texas HHS, Explanation of IDD Services and Supports, revised August 2025 (PDF, Internet Archive copy, September 8, 2026)

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/doing-business-with-hhs/providers/long-term-care/lidda/iddserviceseng.pdf>

Texas Parent to Parent

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

Partners Resource Network, the PATH, PACT, PEN and TEAM parent center pages

<https://prntexas.org/>

Texas Education Agency, Education Service Centers

<https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/other-services/education-service-centers>

Texas HHS, STAR Kids (Internet Archive copy, December 8, 2025)

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

Your Texas Benefits (Internet Archive copy, September 15, 2026)

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

Texas HHS, Medicaid Buy-In for Children (Internet Archive copy, January 3, 2026)

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

Sources (continued)

Texas Children's Health Plan, Autism Services Benefits FAQ for members (PDF, January 2022)

[https://www.texaschildrenshealthplan.org/sites/default/files/pdf/MK-2201-328%20TCHP%20Autism%20Services%20Benefits%20FAQ%20members%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.texaschildrenshealthplan.org/sites/default/files/pdf/MK-2201-328%20TCHP%20Autism%20Services%20Benefits%20FAQ%20members%20(1).pdf)

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>

Texas HHS, interest list reduction (Internet Archive copy, October 31, 2025)

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/about/records-statistics/interest-list-reduction>

The Arc of Texas, Medicaid waivers

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

Texas HHS, YES Waiver (Internet Archive copy, September 8, 2026)

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/mental-health-substance-use/childrens-mental-health/yes-waiver>

Texas HHS, directory of local mental health and behavioral health authorities

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

Texas HHS, Community First Choice questions and answers (PDF, Internet Archive copy, October 31, 2025)

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/health/medicaid-chip/programs/community-first-choice/cfc-faqs.pdf>

Texas HHS, Children's Autism Program (Internet Archive copy, July 31, 2026)

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

Texas HHS, Children's Autism Program Policy Manual, May 2023, sections 5100 and 5200 (PDF, Internet Archive copy, October 31, 2025)

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/childrens-autism-program-policy-manual.pdf>

SPEDTex, Parent-Directed Special Education Services (PDSES)

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

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>

Texas ABLE

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

SPEDTex, special education help for Texas families

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

Texas Education Agency, autism and the Autism Supplement

<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/programs-and-services/autism>

19 Texas Administrative Code 89.1055(g) and (h), rule text (Cornell Legal Information Institute copy)

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/texas/19-Tex-Admin-Code-SS-89-1055>

Texas Education Agency, Secondary Transition Guidance

<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/programs-and-services/state-guidance/secondary-transition-guidance>

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

<https://988lifeline.org/>

Disability Rights Texas, how we decide what cases we take (Internet Archive copy, August 23, 2026)

<https://disabilityrightstx.org/en/getting-help/how-we-decide-what-cases-we-take/>

Disability Rights Texas, how to apply for services (Internet Archive copy, September 6, 2026)

<https://disabilityrightstx.org/en/getting-help/how-to-apply-for-services/>

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 in Texas 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.



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>