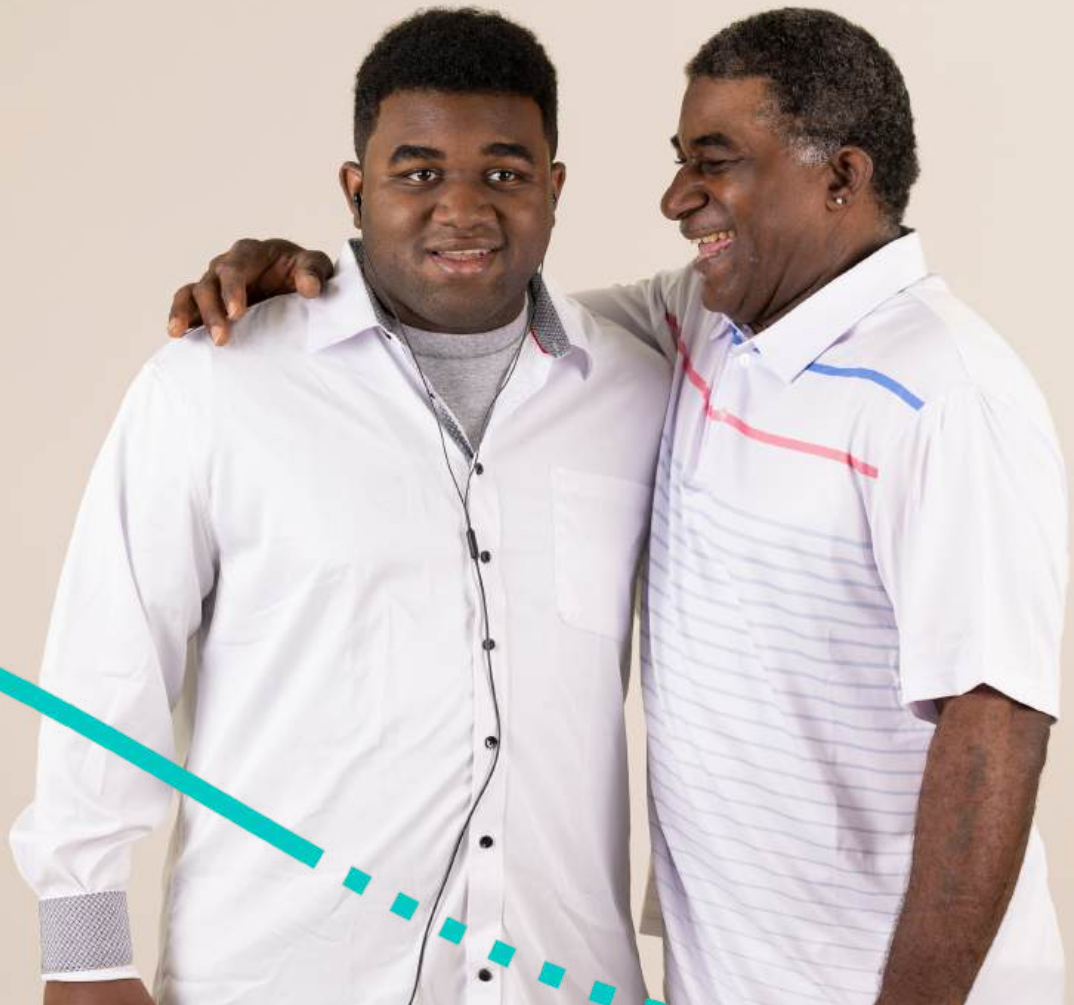




**Autism
Society**
Massachusetts



GUIDE TO AUTISM SERVICES IN MASSACHUSETTS

Adult: Ages 22+



Welcome

Welcome to the Autism Society of Massachusetts! We are honored to connect with you and support you on your journey. As an affiliate of the Autism Society of America, our mission is to create a world where everyone in the Autism community is connected to the resources they need to live fully.



We understand that every individual's experience with Autism is unique, and we are here to provide support, advocacy, education, and resources to individuals with Autism, their families, and professionals.

How We Can Help:

- Information and Referral
- Education & Training
- Safety Resources and Trainings
- Awareness & Advocacy
- Public Policy



You are not alone. Whether you are looking for guidance, community, or ways to get involved, the Autism Society of Massachusetts is here for you. Visit our website to explore our programs, events, and resources.

Learn more at www.autismsocietyma.org



With support and community,
The Autism Society of Massachusetts



State Services: Department of Developmental Services

Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

The Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDS) is the primary service agency in Massachusetts for adults with Autism and developmental disabilities. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) provides support and services to help people live as independently and fully as possible. These services may include assistance with housing, employment, community integration, daily living skills, and access to healthcare. DDS also helps adults connect with resources for education, social engagement, and personal development. The overall goal is to enhance quality of life, promote independence, and ensure that adults with developmental disabilities and Autism can participate meaningfully in their communities.

You should apply for adult DDS services between ages 17 and 18, ideally by 17.5, to allow time for planning as supports often start around age 22, though eligibility begins at 18 if you have an intellectual or developmental disability like Autism. Applying early helps transition from school to adult services smoothly, with formal adult eligibility for those 22+.

DDS provides services to people with a diagnosis of Autism and a developmental disability and Autism (only). Here is a fact sheet provided by DDS regarding eligibility: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/eligibility-fact-sheet-for-adult-autism-spectrum-disorders/download>

Eligibility Process

- Download Application at <https://www.mass.gov/lists/dds-eligibility-forms>.
- Submit an application to DDS to be considered for services.
 - Include important documents (see below) with the application
 - Include a signed the written authorization allowing DDS to review information and speak with family members or advocates who assist the applicant.
- After submitting a complete application, a DDS Regional Eligibility Team member will contact the applicant to schedule a face-to-face intake interview.
- Participate in the intake interview, which helps DDS understand the individual's functioning, support needs, and overall situation.
- DDS reviews all information from the application and interview to determine eligibility for services.

Required Documents for Application

- Birth certificate
- Social Security card
- Health insurance cards
- Proof of Massachusetts residence
- Medical or assessment records supporting the disability diagnosis

State Services: Department of Developmental Services

Eligibility Requirement

To be found eligible for adult DDS services, an individual generally must:

- Be age 22 or older
- Live in Massachusetts
- Meet one of two disability definitions:
 - Intellectual Disability
 - Developmental Disability

After You Are Found Eligible

After you receive your DDS eligibility letter, you will be assigned an Autism Service Coordinator from your local DDS Area Office. This person serves as your main point of contact and helps guide you through available services and supports.

Your Autism Service Coordinator will reach out to schedule an initial meeting, which may take place at your home or a DDS office. During this meeting, the Coordinator will get to know you and your family, learn about your needs and goals, explain potential DDS services, and help connect you to appropriate programs, providers, and community resources. All services are subject to available state funding.

If you choose to receive DDS-funded services, your Service Coordinator will work with you to develop an individualized service plan based on your goals. They will organize team meetings, monitor progress, and ensure services are effective and meeting your needs.

Your Autism Service Coordinator provides ongoing support by helping you set goals, making referrals to services and providers, assisting with management of your DDS service budget, connecting you to community resources, leading planning meetings, and regularly checking in to see how services are working.

State Services: Department of Developmental Services

DDS Service Model- Self Direction

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) offers three ways for people to get services, Traditional Model, Agency with Choice or Participant Directed Program (PDP). Each option gives individuals and families different levels of responsibility and control over how services are designed and provided.

What is Self-Direction?

Self-Directed service delivery models give individuals and families greater control in designing supports that reflect their goals, preferences, and daily lives. In these models, the individual and family share responsibility for managing a budget and can make decisions about who provides support, when services are delivered, what activities or goals are prioritized, where supports take place, and how services are organized. These services are flexible and can be adjusted over time as the individual's needs, skills, and goals change.

Traditional Model: The most commonly used service delivery method in Massachusetts where a qualified provider agency takes primary responsibility for planning, hiring, supervising staff, developing programs, scheduling supports, and managing the individual's DDS budget. Services under this model include things like community day supports, supported employment, day habilitation, shared living, and group homes.

Self-Direction Options: Two self-directed options, Agency with Choice and the Participant Directed Program, require individuals and families to take an active role in both the administration and ongoing management of the services they design, with support from DDS and partner agencies.

- **Agency With Choice (AWC):** A hybrid service model where support staff hiring and supervision is shared between the individual/family and a provider agency. The individual/family helps manage day-to-day services and the DDS budget, with the agency assisting in administrative and compliance tasks.
- **Participant Directed Program (PDP):** A self-directed option that gives the individual and family the highest level of control and flexibility. They take on responsibility for finding, hiring, training, supervising, and managing support staff and services within their DDS funding allocation, with support from a DDS-assigned support broker and fiscal intermediary.
- **Combining Models:** Individuals can mix elements of traditional and self-directed models to match what works best for their needs and preferences. Your local DDS Area Office can provide more information and help you explore all available choices.

State Services: Department of Developmental Services

Traditional Model Services

Community-Based Day Supports (CBDS) help individuals build meaningful, active lives in their communities. These services focus on developing life skills, social connections, and independence through structured daytime activities. CBDS may include exploring career interests, participating in volunteer or community activities, learning daily living and independent living skills, strengthening social and communication skills, and engaging in personal interests or hobbies. CBDS is designed for working-age adults preparing for employment, individuals who work part-time and need structured support when not working, and older adults who want a supervised, group-based day program that supports continued community involvement.

Employment Supports help individuals find, learn, and keep jobs that match their interests and abilities while promoting inclusion in typical work environments.

- **Individual Supported Employment** provides personalized assistance to help someone secure and succeed in a community job or self-employment opportunity. Supports may include job coaching, skills training, and ongoing guidance to support career growth and independence, while encouraging natural workplace supports and inclusion alongside coworkers without disabilities.
- **Group Supported Employment** offers opportunities for small groups of individuals to work together in community settings with support from a provider agency. These programs emphasize integrated work experiences, skill development, and social interaction, and may include small business teams, mobile work crews, or short-term job placements that can lead to individual employment opportunities.

Residential Services

DDS offers a range of residential options to support adults with developmental disabilities, including autism, based on their needs, independence, and personal goals. Services provide safe, supervised living environments while promoting skill-building, community participation, and quality of life.

- **Shared Living:** Individuals live with trained caregivers in a family-like setting, receiving personalized support while practicing daily living skills.
- **Group Homes:** Small, staffed homes that provide 24/7 support, supervision, and assistance with daily activities, designed to foster independence and community engagement.
- **Supported Living:** Individuals live independently or in their own homes with flexible supports tailored to their needs, including help with daily living, budgeting, and accessing community resources.
- **Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs):** Licensed residential facilities for individuals with higher support needs, offering comprehensive care and clinical oversight.

Residential services through DDS have limited availability and require a formal assessment to determine eligibility and the level of support needed.

Family Support Services provide guidance and resources to help families navigate the service system and access supports in their community. Family Navigators offer information, referrals, and assistance in building natural supports, developing emergency plans, and connecting with other families for guidance and peer support. At times, limited financial support may be available for things like respite care or recreational programming, but this funding is restricted and depends on state budgets.

State Services: Department of Developmental Services

“Autism Only” Services

Assistive Technology: Tools, devices, or technology-based supports that increase independence, support skill development, and help individuals achieve goals in their service plan.

Community-Based Day Supports (CBDS): Structured community programs that promote social connection, life skills, pre-employment experiences, and engagement in meaningful activities and interests.

Individual Supported Employment: Employment services that help individuals find, learn, and maintain competitive jobs in the community or pursue self-employment, with ongoing skill-building and career support.

Group Supported Employment: Small-group employment opportunities in community settings, supported by provider agencies, that build job skills, social interaction, and pathways to individual employment.

Family Support Navigation: Guidance and support for families to understand available services, access community resources, and build natural supports within their local communities.

Respite Services: Short-term care options that give caregivers relief while ensuring the individual with autism is safely supported, provided in homes, licensed respite settings, or approved caregiver locations.

DDS Regional Autism Support Centers: There are Autism Support Centers throughout the state that provide an array of information and referral services, resources, and supports to children and adults with Autism. Find your local center at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/dds-regional-autism-support-centers>

State Services: Department of Developmental Services

“Autism Only” Services

Adults age 18 and older who have completed high school and have an autism-only diagnosis may be eligible for Adult Autism Services through the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS). To qualify, individuals must live in Massachusetts, have a developmental disability such as Autism (without an intellectual disability), and meet DDS eligibility criteria.

DDS provides a range of community-based supports designed to help adults with autism reach personal goals and live more independently. Services may include employment and day program supports, help with college or individual goals, in-home assistance, and connections to community resources. Services are individualized based on a person’s needs and preferences, available programs, and funding.

Once approved, individuals are paired with an Autism Service Coordinator who helps identify goals, develop a service plan, connect to providers, and ensure supports are working well.

Services:

Service Coordination: Person-centered planning and oversight provided by an Autism Service Coordinator who helps individuals identify goals, access services, coordinate providers, and ensure supports are effective and aligned with their needs.

Individual Supports: Community-based services that help adults with autism live independently and participate fully in their communities by building daily living, social, safety, and life skills.

Pre-Engagement Services: Outreach and relationship-based supports designed for individuals who are isolated or have difficulty engaging in services, helping them gradually connect to community activities and supports.

Coaching Services: One-on-one, goal-focused support provided by trained coaches who understand autism and mental health, helping individuals build skills, develop routines, and work toward personal goals (not a substitute for therapy).

College Navigation Services: Individualized support for DDS-eligible college students in Massachusetts, helping them manage academics, navigate campus life, communicate with staff, and access academic and mental health resources.

Behavioral Supports: Clinical services that assess challenging behaviors and develop positive behavior support plans, including caregiver and staff training and ongoing monitoring.

State Services: Department of Developmental Services

Individual Service Plan (ISP) For DDS Services

An Individual Service Plan (ISP) is a personalized plan developed for every person receiving services through the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS). The ISP is designed to identify a person's goals, needs, and preferences, and outline the supports and services necessary to help them live safely, independently, and fully in their community. It is a collaborative plan, created with input from the individual, their family or guardian, the Autism Service Coordinator, and any providers or team members who support the individual.

Purpose of the ISP

The ISP serves as a roadmap for the person's services and supports. It ensures that everyone involved understands the person's goals and how best to support them. The plan focuses on areas such as:

- Daily living and independence skills
- Community participation and social engagement
- Education, employment, and vocational goals
- Health, safety, and well-being
- Development of personal interests and hobbies

ISP Meeting

The ISP is created and updated through a formal meeting led by the Autism Service Coordinator. This meeting is a collaborative discussion where the team:

- Reviews the individual's strengths, needs, and priorities
- Determines which services and supports will help achieve the person's goals
- Decides how, when, and where services will be delivered
- Develops strategies to encourage independence, safety, and skill development
- Identifies responsibilities for the individual, family, and providers

The meeting also gives the person and family an opportunity to ask questions, provide feedback, and make decisions about their services.

Frequency of ISP Meetings

- The ISP is reviewed at least once per year to ensure it reflects the individual's current needs and goals.
- Additional meetings may be scheduled as needed, such as when a person's circumstances, goals, or support needs change.
- Regular check-ins between the individual, family, and Service Coordinator help make sure services are effective and goals are being met.

Benefits of the ISP

The ISP provides a clear plan for services and supports while giving individuals and families a voice in decision-making. It promotes:

- Personalized supports that match the person's goals and priorities
- Coordination among providers and the Service Coordinator
- Monitoring of progress and adjustments as needs evolve
- Greater independence and participation in the community

In summary, the ISP is an essential tool in DDS services, helping individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities plan for a fulfilling, safe, and independent life, while ensuring that services remain flexible and responsive to changing needs.

State Services: Department of Mental Health (DMH)

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) offers services to adults that have serious and persistent mental illness that substantially impacts their functioning across life activities and contexts. [Clinical criteria](#) for DMH includes but is not limited to diagnoses of Schizophrenia and other Psychotic Disorders, Bipolar and Depressive Disorders, and Anxiety Disorders. DMH offers a range of services including case management, residential services, inpatient programs, outpatient services, respite programs, and day programming. Services offered can vary in intensity depending on the needs of the individual.

Applying for DMH Services

DMH uses a single application form for all applicants, regardless of age. To request services, you must submit:

- Request for DMH Services application
- Authorization(s) for Release of Information (included in the application packet)

While optional, providing additional medical or psychiatric information, such as outpatient records, testing, or hospital admission/discharge reports. at the time of application can help speed up the eligibility process. For emergency or crisis services, call 1-(877) 382-1609 or visit the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP).

How to Submit Your Application:

- In person: Visit your local DMH site office: <https://www.mass.gov/dmh-offices-facilities-and-staff-directory>
- Online, by mail, or by fax: Available through DMH.

Next Steps:

Within 7 days of receiving your application, DMH will contact you or your guardian by phone to:

- Confirm receipt of the application
- Explain the determination process
- Verify that you wish to continue with the process
- Assess immediate needs and respond as needed
- Collect any additional relevant information to support your request for services

Download the application and find your local DMH Office: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-dmh-services>

State Services: Department of Mental Health (DMH) Services

Inpatient/Continuing Care System: DMH-operated psychiatric facilities, including hospitals, psychiatric units in public health hospitals, and community mental health centers, offering treatment, rehabilitation, and recovery supports.

Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS): Comprehensive, clinically focused services that provide treatment, peer and family support, and housing options to help individuals stabilize symptoms, build skills, and live successfully in the community.

Respite Services: Short-term, community-based supports that help individuals maintain or return to independent living, provided either at a site-based location or in the individual's home.

Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT): Multidisciplinary teams provide intensive, 24/7 community-based psychiatric treatment, outreach, and rehabilitation to support individuals in their natural environments.

Clubhouses: Membership-based community centers offering psychosocial rehabilitation, skill-building, goal setting, and peer support to help individuals live, work, learn, and participate in their communities.

Recovery Learning Communities (RLCs): Peer support services for individuals with serious mental illness or emotional distress, including self-help, advocacy, training, and information and referral.

DMH Case Management: State-operated service providing needs assessment, service planning, referrals, care coordination, and family/caregiver support.

Forensic Services: Mental health assessments and consultations for individuals involved in the criminal justice system, with court clinicians serving as liaisons for adult and juvenile cases.

Homelessness Services: Supports for adults experiencing homelessness who have serious mental illness or emotional disturbance. Includes:

- **Outreach and Engagement:** Connecting individuals to treatment, housing, benefits, and community services.
- **Stabilization:** Safe Haven and Dual Diagnosis Shelter programs providing temporary safe housing and access to services.
- **Housing First:** Supportive housing programs (ATARP, HOP I & II) offering lease management and ongoing treatment for DMH-authorized individuals.

State Services: MassAbility

MassAbility (formerly the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission) is a state agency that helps people with disabilities, including autism, live independently, participate in their communities, and pursue meaningful work. MassAbility focuses on abilities and strengths, providing supports to help individuals with autism access services, develop skills, and reach personal goals in education, employment, and daily life.

How to Apply for MassAbility Services

MassAbility uses MassAbility Connect, an online platform that simplifies the application process and helps identify programs that match your needs. MassAbility Connect collects your referral information in one place and helps the agency identify programs and services you may be eligible for. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/apply-for-services>

- The initial step in applying is to submit an online application. To start your application, visit www.mass.gov/info-details/apply-for-services and click on "apply for services," or call the information and referral line at 617-204-3665.
- After submitting your application, a team member will contact you within 7 days to review your application and discuss next steps.
- Depending on the program you're applying for, additional documentation may be required before determining eligibility. The MassAbility Connect team member will guide you through this when they reach out.
- You'll then undergo an initial interview, this can be conducted over the phone, via zoom, or in person with an eligibility screener. It can also be completed using our online assisted intake form. The interview can be done promptly when a MassAbility Connect team member reaches out or is scheduled for a future date.
- Once the interview is complete, and all necessary documentation is received, your eligibility will be determined. If eligible, your case will be assigned to a staff member from the program, who will reach out to discuss service delivery.

Need Help? Call the MassAbility Connect Help Desk at 617-204-3665 or email MassAbilityConnect@mass.gov for guidance through the application process.

What is MassAbility's Role in Determining Disability Benefits?

MassAbility's Disability Determination Services (DDS) evaluates the medical eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). While the Social Security Administration (SSA) manages applications and checks non-medical criteria like income and living arrangements, MassAbility DDS is responsible for determining whether a person meets the legal definition of disability. They can also assist with follow-ups on cases still with DDS. For more information visit:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massability-legislation-government-resources>

State Services: MassAbility Programs & Services

Career & Employment Services

MassAbility offers employment supports tailored to people with Autism, including:

- Career counseling and job coaching
- Job placement and ongoing workplace support
- Vocational training and skill development
- Assistive technology to help with communication, organization, or other workplace needs
- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students preparing to move from school to work

These programs help individuals with autism identify strengths, gain work experience, and succeed in competitive employment.

Independent Living & Community Supports

Supports focus on helping individuals with Autism live as independently as possible:

- Independent Living Centers (ILCs): Peer-based programs that teach daily living skills, self-advocacy, and community participation
- Supported Living & Home Care: Assistance with organizing daily routines, managing health needs, and accessing accessible housing
- Brain Injury & Related Supports: Specialized services for individuals who may have co-occurring conditions
- Home Modifications & Assistive Technology: Tools and equipment to increase safety, independence, and accessibility

Benefits, Rights, & Advocacy

MassAbility helps individuals with Autism understand and access benefits such as SSI, SSDI, or other supports, and offers advocacy to ensure rights are respected in work, school, or community settings.

Youth & Transition Programs

For students and young adults with Autism, MassAbility offers services to prepare for life after school:

- Transition planning from school to adult services
- Job readiness training
- Career exploration and work experiences
- Leadership development and self-advocacy skills

Housing Resources

Autism Housing Pathways (AHP) is a nonprofit organization that supports families who want to create stable, supportive housing options for adults with autism and other developmental disabilities. AHP focuses on education, guidance, and resource-sharing to help families explore and develop self-directed housing that meets residential, social, and community needs. AHP provides information on housing models, funding and financing options, adaptive skills and technology, design and construction considerations, and ownership structures. The organization also connects families with housing groups, developers, legal and financial professionals, and other experts.

<http://autismhousingpathways.org/>

18? Section8! is a resource created by Autism Housing Pathways that provides clear, practical information about Section 8 housing vouchers for individuals with disabilities and their families. The site focuses on helping families understand how Section 8 works and why early planning is critical.

<https://18section8.org/> Learn more about Section 8: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-section-8-housing-choice-vouchers-program-hcyp>

The Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) (Also Called Section 8) helps people with disabilities live independently in housing they choose by providing a mobile, tenant-based rental voucher for a one-bedroom apartment. Participants typically pay about 25–30% of their monthly income toward rent, and the local housing agency pays the remaining balance directly to the landlord, with voucher amounts based on the unit's zip code. To qualify, individuals must have a disability, be under age 60 at initial eligibility, and meet income limits. Applications are submitted through the state's CHAMP system, and applicants may join multiple waiting lists. Because demand is high, wait times can be long, making it important to keep contact information updated. Some applicants may qualify for a homeless priority, which can speed up the process. <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-alternative-housing-voucher-program-ahvp>

Mass Access is a free, online housing resource that helps connect people with disabilities to available accessible and affordable housing options. The program provides detailed listings that include location, rent range, unit size, accessibility features, and current availability. Individuals with disabilities, as well as family members or advocates, can use Mass Access to search for housing at any age, income level, or disability type. <https://www.massaccesshousingregistry.org/>

Housing Resources

Supportive Housing combines housing with services for older adults and people living with disabilities. Through this program, Resident Service Coordinators are on-site in subsidized housing to help residents access community resources, arrange meals, plan social activities, and manage issues that arise—helping to foster a sense of stability and community.

Overall, there are 61 Supportive Housing locations across the state that provide location-specific services to over 8,800 subsidized housing residents. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/supportive-housing>

HousingWorks is an online housing resource and support network that helps people find and apply for affordable and subsidized housing throughout Massachusetts. It provides a free, comprehensive housing search tool that lets applicants locate available low-income housing and submit applications efficiently. The platform also offers tools for advocates to pre-fill applications and manage multiple waitlists at once, and it supports housing providers with centralized waitlist administration and reporting tools. Additionally, HousingWorks compiles real-time housing demand and inventory data that can inform housing policy and planning efforts across the region. <https://www.masshousing.com/>

Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) are public agencies that manage affordable and subsidized housing programs at the city or town level. They administer programs such as public housing and Section 8 housing vouchers, maintain housing waitlists, and help eligible individuals and families access safe, affordable housing in their communities. LHAs follow federal and state housing guidelines while responding to local housing needs and availability. Find your local office here:

<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-section-8-housing-choice-vouchers-program-hcyp>

Independent Living Centers (ILCs) are community-based organizations that support people with disabilities in reaching their personal goals and living as independently as possible. ILCs offer a range of services including peer support and counseling, advocacy, practical skills training (such as budgeting and finding housing), and information and referrals to resources like accessible housing options, medical providers, and community supports. These services are designed to empower individuals with disabilities to make informed choices and fully participate in their communities.

<https://www.mass.gov/independent-living-centers>

Health and Wellenss

Getting the right health care as an adult with autism starts with access to knowledgeable medical providers and, when needed, an accurate diagnosis. Building a relationship with a primary care provider who understands Autism is an important first step. Your doctor can help coordinate care, monitor overall health, discuss concerns, and make referrals to specialists who can support your medical and developmental needs.

Regular visits with a trusted primary care provider allow adults with autism to manage ongoing health needs, address new concerns, and stay up to date on routine medical care, including preventive screenings and vaccinations. Vaccines play a critical role in protecting adults from serious illnesses. Extensive scientific research has shown that vaccines do not cause autism, and reliable, evidence-based information is essential for making informed health decisions.

<https://autismsociety.org/vei/>

Primary care providers can refer to specialists as needed, such as:

- Neuropsychologists or Psychologists for autism evaluations and diagnostic assessments
- Neurologists for concerns such as seizures, migraines, or sleep disorders
- Gastroenterologists for digestive issues, which are common among adults with autism
- Speech and Language Therapists for communication and social communication support
- Occupational Therapists for sensory processing, daily living skills, and functional supports

While navigating the health care system can feel overwhelming, having a primary care provider who understands autism and can guide referrals, insurance coverage, and next steps is key to accessing the supports and care you need.

The Autism Society of Massachusetts Medical Resources offers a set of free, printable tools designed to help people with Autism and their families navigate the healthcare system more confidently. These resources include communication boards (in English and Spanish), an “All About Me” health profile, a guide to different types of doctors, and materials on how to advocate in medical settings. The page also provides fact sheets on the flu vaccine, general vaccine information, and understanding co-occurring conditions, all aimed at supporting effective communication with providers and informed decision-making about health care.

<https://www.autismsocietyma.org/medical-resources>



Interventions & Therapies

While there is no known cure for Autism, there are treatment and education approaches that can address some of the challenges associated with the condition. Intervention can help to lessen disruptive behaviors, and education can teach self-help skills for greater independence. But just as there is no one symptom or behavior that identifies people with Autism, there is no single treatment that will be effective for everyone who experiences Autism.

Individuals can use the positive aspects of their condition to their benefit, but treatment must begin as early as possible and focus on the individual's unique strengths, weaknesses, and needs. 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 supports your child's specific needs. No single service or intervention is likely to meet the needs of every individual with Autism. Services and support should be offered by trained, qualified professionals. The interventions and therapies should encourage self-determination, foster community involvement, and improve quality of life.

Throughout the history of the Autism Society, parents and professionals have been confounded by conflicting messages regarding which treatment options are appropriate for children and adults with Autism. As each person responds to treatment differently, we cannot endorse any one treatment or program. Families should educate themselves about all options and choose what they feel is in the best interest of their child and family, based on their experience and what resources are available.

Review different types of interventions and therapies on the Autism Society page here:

<https://autismsociety.org/resources/intervention-and-therapies/>

www.autismsocietyma.org



Some options include:

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

Evaluating Interventions & Therapies

It is important to match a person's potential and specific needs with treatments or strategies that are likely to help them reach established goals and greatest potential. The Autism Society does not want to give the impression that parents, caregivers, or professionals will select just one treatment from a list. A search for appropriate treatment must be paired with the knowledge that all treatment approaches are not equal – what works for one will not work for all. Individuals can use the positive aspects of their condition to their benefit, but treatment must begin as early as possible and focus on the individual's unique strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Review the report from the National Autism Center that reviews evidence-based practices. <https://nationalautismcenter.org/national-standards/>

Making Informed Decisions

To the maximum extent possible, informed decisions should be made by the individual with Autism and their family members in partnership with a multidisciplinary team. The selection of current evidence-based intervention practices should be guided by objective assessment, goals, and outcomes. Services and support should be delivered with fidelity by qualified and appropriately trained professionals. All services should promote self-determination, enhance inclusive community engagement, and result in improved quality of life. Abuse of any kind is not acceptable. No single service or intervention is likely to meet the needs of every individual with Autism. Each person should have broad and equal access to high quality, individualized support and services. Selection of a program, service, or intervention method should be based on a comprehensive assessment of the person's abilities, needs, and interests. Services should be outcome-based to ensure they meet the individualized goals of the person with Autism.



After identifying available treatments, interventions, therapies and other services, you'll need to choose which ones are best for you. Here are some considerations to help you make your decision:

- What is the purpose of this theory/practice?
- What do I have to do to benefit from the theory/practice, and what are its lasting effects?
- For how long must I be involved in this theory/practice to benefit from it?
- Is there any physical or psychological harm this theory/practice?
- What are the personal costs of time and money that I will have to endure, and can I be reimbursed for these expenses?
- How will the effects of this theory/practice be evaluated?
- Are the theoreticians or practitioners competently and appropriately trained and prepared to implement the provisions of the theory or practice? How is their competence assured?
- What steps will be taken to protect my privacy?
- Are there any legal actions, current or past, against promoters, consumers or practitioners of the theory/practice?
- How successful has the program been for other people?
- Do staff members have training and experience in working with individual with Autism?
- How are activities planned and organized?
- Are there predictable daily schedules and routines?
- How much individual attention will my child receive?
- How is progress measured? Will my behavior be closely observed and recorded?
- Will I be given tasks and rewards that are personally motivating?
- Is the environment designed to minimize distractions?
- Will the program prepare me to continue the therapy at home?
- What is the cost, time commitment, and location of the program?

Insurance Coverage

In recent years, Massachusetts has made significant strides in expanding insurance coverage for individuals with Autism to access services. Services covered by medical insurance are classified as medically necessary, which qualifies them as “treatments”. Let’s review key legislation and various types of health insurance coverage available for Autism treatment in Massachusetts.

Key Legislation

1. **ARICA (An Act Relative to Insurance Coverage for Autism)**: Passed in 2010, ARICA mandates that private health insurers in Massachusetts provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of Autism. This law has been crucial in ensuring that individuals with Autism can access necessary treatment without facing financial barriers.
2. **Autism Omnibus Bill**: Enacted in 2014, this legislation expanded coverage for Autism treatment under MassHealth, the state’s Medicaid program. The bill aims to enhance access to a broader range of services for individuals with Autism.

Types of Health Insurance and Coverage for Autism Treatment

Understanding your health insurance plan is essential to determine what Autism treatment coverage is available. Here’s an overview of various types of health insurance plans and their coverage for autism treatments:

Understanding Your Insurance Coverage

When navigating coverage, it’s important to understand the different types of insurance you may have:

- **Public Insurance**: This includes MassHealth (Massachusetts Medicaid) and Medicare. Eligibility for MassHealth varies based on factors such as income, age, and disability status. Notably, individuals with disabilities often qualify for MassHealth regardless of their income, although premiums may apply if the household income exceeds certain levels.

Insurance Coverage

- **Private Insurance:** Most employers offer health insurance to employees, typically in two main forms:
 - **Fully Funded Plans:** In this setup, employers purchase insurance from a company, which is then responsible for covering health care costs. Fully funded plans in Massachusetts must comply with ARICA, providing coverage for autism treatments.
 - **Self-Funded Plans:** The employer pays directly for employees' health care costs. While these plans are subject to federal regulations rather than state laws like ARICA, many still provide some level of autism treatment coverage.
 - It's crucial to note that both fully funded and self-funded plans can appear similar on the surface, which may make it challenging to determine the type of plan you have.
- **Other Private Plans:** State employees and some municipal employees typically receive their insurance through the Group Insurance Commission (GIC), all of which are subject to ARICA. The Massachusetts Health Connector also offers various plans, but only certain Unsubsidized Qualified Health Plans (QHPs) are required to comply with ARICA.

Type of Plan	Coverage	Notes
MassHealth	YES	ABA therapy is covered under MassHealth Standard, CommonHealth, and Family Assistance. Age limits may apply.
Private Fully Funded Plans	YES	Coverage is provided, but out-of-state plans may vary.
Private Self-Funded Plans	Maybe	Coverage can differ; it's advisable to contact your HR department or insurance plan for specifics.
State Employees (GIC)	YES	All plans under the Group Insurance Commission comply with ARICA.
Connector QHP	YES	Coverage depends on the specific plan; check the details of your insurance.

Insurance Coverage

What Services Are Covered

Under Massachusetts law, a range of services is covered for individuals diagnosed with Autism when prescribed or ordered by a licensed physician or psychologist who determines that the care is medically necessary.

Here's an overview of the services that are typically covered:

- **Habilitative or Rehabilitative Care:** This includes professional counseling and guidance services, as well as treatment programs essential for developing, maintaining, and restoring an individual's functioning to the fullest extent possible. One prominent type of care in this category is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), which must be supervised by a board-certified behavior analyst.
- **Pharmacy Care:** Coverage extends to medications prescribed by licensed physicians, along with any health-related services deemed medically necessary to assess the need for or effectiveness of those medications. This is consistent with how pharmacy care is provided for other medical conditions under the insurance policy.
- **Psychiatric Care:** Direct or consultative services provided by a licensed psychiatrist are included in the coverage. This ensures that individuals have access to necessary mental health support from qualified professionals.
- **Psychological Care:** Services offered by licensed psychologists, whether direct or consultative, are also covered. This is vital for addressing the psychological aspects associated with Autism.
- **Therapeutic Care:** This encompasses a variety of services provided by licensed or certified professionals, including speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and social workers. These therapeutic interventions are essential for helping individuals develop skills and strategies to navigate daily challenges effectively.

It's important to note that insurance coverage for Autism treatments does not affect the educational services provided under an Individualized Service Plan (ISP). These services are governed by different laws and regulations, ensuring that people with Autism receive the support they need in their educational settings, regardless of their insurance coverage. This means that someone can access both insurance-covered treatments and the services outlined in their ISP without any conflict between the two.

Insurance Coverage

How to Access Services

To access autism treatment services, the first step is to contact your insurance company. It's crucial to understand exactly what your plan covers, as well as any limits or specific requirements. Your insurance provider can also offer a list of approved providers or give you access to an online portal where you can search for providers covered by your plan.

In addition to checking with your insurance, there are other ways to find qualified providers:

- **Ask Your Primary Care Provider:** Your doctor is a great resource for provider recommendations. They often have a network of specialists they work with regularly and can point you in the right direction.
- **Contact Providers Directly:** If you already have a provider in mind, reach out to their office to confirm that they accept your insurance. You can also call different providers to ask if they accept your plan and learn more about their services.

Once you find a provider that works for you, contact them to begin the intake process. If there's a wait for services, don't be discouraged. Consider getting on the waitlists of several providers and choose the first one that has an opening. This way, you can start receiving services sooner, and if needed, you can switch providers later as more availability opens up.

Insurance Resource

The Insurance Resource Center is a valuable resource for families navigating Autism-related insurance challenges. They are experts in this field and can assist with understanding coverage, answering questions, and overcoming insurance barriers. For more information, visit their website: massairc.org

Accessing Health Insurance in Massachusetts

MassHealth provides health coverage for eligible children, families, and individuals, including those with disabilities. It ensures that families have access to essential medical services, including Early Intervention. To learn more about MassHealth and apply for coverage, visit <https://www.mass.gov/information-for-masshealth-applicants>

After age of 26: In Massachusetts, most people remain on a parent's health insurance plan until age 26, but adults with a documented disability can often stay on a parent's employer or private policy past age 26 if the parent applies to their insurer and provides required medical documentation ahead of time. Because requirements vary by insurer, it's best to start the process well before the 26th birthday and check with the employer or insurance company about their specific rules, paperwork, and review process. If they cannot stay on private insurance, apply for state health insurance visit:

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

www.autismsocietyma.org

Other State Services

Personal Care Attendant (PCA) Services

PCA services provide essential in-home support for individuals with disabilities and chronic conditions, helping them with daily activities to maintain independence. In Massachusetts, PCA services are funded through MassHealth and allow eligible individuals to hire and manage their own caregivers, who assist with tasks such as bathing, dressing, meal preparation, mobility, and other personal care needs. These services enable individuals to live in their homes and communities rather than in institutional settings. PCAs can be family members (excluding spouses or legal guardians) or other trusted caregivers chosen by the individual. Eligibility and service hours are determined through an assessment process, and individuals must be able to self-direct their care or have a surrogate to manage services.

Learn more here: <https://www.mass.gov/masshealth-personal-care-attendant-program>

Massachusetts Home Care Program helps adults with disabilities—and older adults—stay safely and independently in their own homes by providing coordinated in-home and community support services based on assessed need. Services can include help with meal preparation, grocery shopping, light housekeeping, medication pick-up, assistive technology, transportation, personal emergency response systems, and care coordination with trained professionals to connect you to community resources. The program is income-based, services are delivered through local Aging Services Access Points, and eligibility is determined by functional need and residency in Massachusetts. Because it is a state-funded program, availability and cost shares vary and may require an assessment to determine what supports you qualify for. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/home-care-program>

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology (AT) includes tools and devices that help people with autism and other disabilities communicate, learn, work, and live more independently. In Massachusetts, many AT needs can be met through medical insurance, with devices and supports accessed as part of services from speech-language pathologists (SLPs), occupational therapists (OTs), and physical therapists (PTs) when medically necessary. In addition to insurance-based access, Massachusetts offers statewide assistive technology programs and community resources that allow individuals and families to explore, borrow, and receive training on devices, helping ensure the technology is the right fit before purchase and supporting access when insurance coverage is limited.

Massachusetts' Assistive Technology Centers (ATCs) through DDS offer people eligible for DDS supports access to assistive technology that can increase independence and safety in daily life. These centers provide evaluation, consultation, and help with modifying or creating devices in areas like seating and mobility, daily living aids, recreational supports, and job accommodations, ensuring that equipment is properly prescribed, fitted, and used. Services are available at regional centers in Worcester, Northampton, Wrentham, and Danvers, and individuals can be referred through their DDS Service Coordinator or provider.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/assistive-technology-centers>

MassAbility Assistive Technology Services also supports residents of all ages with finding, demoing, borrowing, or donating devices like communication tools, mobility equipment, and adaptive technology to help people live more independently at home, school, or work.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massability-assistive-technology-services>

Easterseals Massachusetts offers assistive technology (AT) support to help people with disabilities increase independence and access education, work, and community life. Their AT services include evaluations, device demonstrations, training, and help identifying tools like communication devices (AAC), adaptive hardware, and home or work supports that meet individual needs. They also partner with MassAbility Assistive Technology Regional Centers where people can borrow or try devices, access loan programs, and receive tech support and training, making it easier to choose and use the right technology for everyday tasks.

<https://www.easterseals.com/get-support/areas-of-support/assistive-technology>

Financial Supports

Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)

The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) provides support and resources to low-income individuals and families in Massachusetts, helping them meet basic needs, enhance their quality of life, and work toward long-term financial stability. DTA serves approximately one in six residents of the Commonwealth by offering direct economic assistance through cash benefits, food assistance via the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and workforce training opportunities. The agency also connects individuals with housing resources, child care assistance, and other essential services to promote self-sufficiency and economic mobility. For more information, visit <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/departments-of-transitional-assistance>

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) provides financial assistance to adults with disabilities, including Autism, to help cover basic needs such as food, shelter, and essential living expenses. To qualify, an individual must be age 18 or older and have a medically determinable physical or mental impairment that results in significant functional limitations and is expected to last at least 12 months or result in death. Eligibility is based on the individual's own income and resources. Once a person turns 18, parental income and assets are no longer considered, even if the individual lives at home. Many adults who qualify for SSI are also eligible for Medicaid, which can help cover medical care, behavioral health services, and long-term supports. Depending on the state, additional services and supports may also be available. Adults can apply for SSI directly through the Social Security Administration. The application process includes providing medical documentation and information about how autism impacts daily functioning, work, and independent living. <https://www.ssa.gov/apply>

Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP)

A state-funded initiative that offers 0% interest loans to make home modifications that improve safety and accessibility for individuals with disabilities, including autism. Homeowners can use the funds for modifications such as installing fencing, creating sensory-friendly spaces, adapting bathrooms or bedrooms, and more. These changes are designed to support individuals with Autism in living safely and independently at home. <https://cedac.org/find-out-if-you-qualify/>

Future and Financial Planning

Many individuals with Autism require ongoing support throughout their lifespan. One of the primary worries of family members is, “What will happen to my loved one with Autism when I am no longer able to provide care for them due to my own aging, illness or death?”

With careful planning this concern can be lessened. There are significant details to navigate, including financial and legal concerns for children and adults with Autism who require ongoing support that extends beyond what a family can provide. This could be because the family member with Autism outlives their familial support network, the needs extend beyond what a family can provide due to their own healthcare needs, or a host of other circumstances.

Individuals and families should be empowered to make a plan for their future. One planning tool that may help is the [Charting the Lifecourse framework](#). This framework is designed for individuals and family members to design and plan their life and advocate for support.

Special Needs Trust (SNT)

In order to qualify for certain government benefits, an individual with disabilities must meet stringent standards for financial need. If your child will be dependent upon such public programs for medical care, housing, employment assistance or other services, you may wish to supplement the very basic levels of support provided. Assets that are held by SNTs are not considered by the government when evaluating applications for means-tested programs.

In addition, an SNT is a good tool for ensuring that the assets set aside for an individual with disabilities are managed responsibly and not subject to creditors. There are several types of SNTs, depending upon who funds them and how they are administered. Find out more about Special Needs Trust in this fact sheet within The Arc’s Center for Future Planning: <https://futureplanning.thearc.org/pages/learn/where-to-start/financing-the-future/special-needs-trusts>

Future and Financial Planning

Will

A will details your wishes concerning the disposition of your property upon death. It establishes what portion of your estate should be allocated to your child with disabilities and other heirs, and whether or not certain funds should be held by a special needs trust. While there's no such thing as a perfect plan, doing nothing is almost certainly a bad plan. The point is to create a flexible plan that can—and will—change over time to reflect events in the lives of all involved. The Special Needs Alliance provides a list of special needs attorneys near you. <https://www.specialneedsalliance.org/find-an-attorney/>

Letter of Intent

The letter of intent (LOI), while not a legal document, is key to your special needs planning. There's a tremendous amount of information about a child's history that only a parent knows, and particularly for adults with Autism who have more difficulty expressing themselves, an LOI can provide information that might otherwise be difficult to access.

It's a great resource for trustees and service providers, summarizing information regarding family history, an individual's needs, habits and preferences, and your hopes for the future. The Special Needs Alliance provides more information, including sample letters.

<https://www.specialneedsalliance.org/the-voice/letter-of-intent-4/>

Grief and Bereavement

Unfortunately, loss and grief are part of life. All people, including children and adults who experience Autism, grieve in their own unique ways. Grief can be complex for any of us. It is important to acknowledge that any loss can cause grief. Loss of a favorite toy or routine as well as the loss of a house, school, or family member can be very significant. All people need support and understanding when they are experiencing the challenges of loss and grief, including those who experience Autism.

Thanks to the Indiana Center on Autism for providing the guidance on Supporting Individuals with Autism Coping with Grief or Loss through Death or Divorce.

<https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/articles/supporting-individuals-on-the-autism-spectrum-coping-with-grief-and-loss>

The Georgetown University Center on Disabilities offers this resource: Complex and Moral Issues: End of Life Decisions. <https://gucchd.georgetown.edu/complex/index.html>

See also the Center for Loss & Life Transition for a wide number of useful resources in grief and loss. <https://www.centerforloss.com/>

Guardianship and Alternatives

In Massachusetts, individuals are legally recognized as adults at age 18. At that point, they are presumed to have the right to make their own decisions about medical care, finances, education, housing, and other personal matters, regardless of an autism diagnosis. Autism alone does not remove an individual's legal rights or decision-making authority. Because individuals with autism have a wide range of strengths and support needs, any limitation on legal rights should be considered carefully. Guardianship is a court-ordered arrangement that removes some or all decision-making authority from an individual and transfers it to another person. In Massachusetts, guardianship is intended to be used only when less restrictive alternatives are not sufficient to protect a person's health, safety, or financial well-being.

Massachusetts law encourages consideration of less restrictive options before pursuing guardianship, including:

- **Supported Decision-Making (SDM):** SDM allows adults with disabilities to make their own decisions with support from trusted people they choose. The individual remains the decision-maker, while supporters help gather information, discuss options, and communicate decisions. SDM is recognized and promoted in Massachusetts as an alternative to guardianship.
- **Health Care Proxy:** An adult may appoint a health care agent to make medical decisions only if they are unable to do so themselves. This does not require court involvement and can be changed or revoked at any time.
- **Power of Attorney (Financial):** A power of attorney allows an individual to give another person authority to help manage finances while retaining their legal rights. No court action is required, and the document can be limited or revoked.
- **Limited Guardianship:** When guardianship is necessary, Massachusetts courts can grant limited guardianship, restricting the guardian's authority to specific areas (such as medical or housing decisions) while allowing the individual to retain other rights.
- **Full Guardianship:** Full guardianship transfers broad decision-making authority to a guardian and requires a court process, including medical documentation and judicial oversight. In Massachusetts, financial authority may also require the appointment of a conservator, which can be the same or a different person.
- **Rogers Monitor** is a court-appointed role in Massachusetts for individuals who are under guardianship and prescribed antipsychotic medications. The monitor helps ensure that the person's rights are protected by reviewing treatment plans, monitoring the use of medication, and reporting back to the court. This oversight is intended to confirm that medications are used appropriately, consent requirements are followed, and the individual's well-being remains the primary focus.

Guardianship and Alternatives

Here is information from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that explains guardianship, alternatives to guardianship, and the court process, including how guardianship is established, reviewed, and monitored to protect an individual's rights.

- <https://www.mass.gov/lists/probate-family-court-forms-for-guardianship-and-conservatorship#1>

Volunteer Lawyers Project: Provides assistance with free legal assistance include guardianship support to families in the Greater Boston Area. <https://vlpnet.org/>

Legal Resources

The Disability Law Center (DLC) is Massachusetts' federally mandated Protection & Advocacy agency that provides legal advocacy to protect the rights of people with disabilities and help them participate fully and equally in community life. DLC offers information, referrals, technical assistance, and, when appropriate, legal representation on disability-related issues such as discrimination, access to services, and abuse or neglect, working to promote independence, integration, and equal opportunity across the state. <https://www.dlc-ma.org/>

Legal Aid at Work is a nonprofit legal services organization that has been assisting low-income, working families for more than 100 years. It offers free legal information and some direct legal aid. See free legal hotline for people with disabilities. <https://legalaidthatwork.org/clinics/>

The Autism Justice Center is an initiative of the Autism Society that works to ensure fair and equitable treatment for individuals with autism within the justice system. It provides education, resources, and advocacy to improve outcomes and protect the rights of people with autism who come into contact with law enforcement, courts, or correctional systems.

<https://autismsociety.org/autism-justice-center/>

Special Needs Law Group is a Massachusetts-based law firm that focuses on special needs planning, guardianship, estate planning, and public benefits to help individuals with disabilities and their families plan for the future. <https://specialneeds-law.com/>

Safety

Disability Indicator Form

The Disability Indicator Form allows individuals with disabilities or their caregivers to notify 9-1-1 personnel that someone in the home may require specialized assistance during an emergency. This information helps first responders provide appropriate support by understanding specific needs before arriving on the scene. The indicator is linked to a phone number, ensuring that when a 9-1-1 call is placed, dispatchers are immediately alerted to the presence of an individual with a disability. This service is available for landline, wireless, and VoIP consumers in Massachusetts. <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/request-a-disability-indicator-form-for-landline-wireless-and-voip-consumers>

Project Lifesaver

Project Lifesaver is a program designed to help quickly locate individuals with autism, dementia, or other cognitive conditions who may wander and become lost. Participants wear a small, trackable transmitter that enables trained search teams to find them more efficiently, reducing search times and increasing safety. The program is used by law enforcement and emergency responders across the country to provide peace of mind to families and caregivers. <https://projectlifesaver.org/get-involved/enroll-a-loved-one/>

Medical ID Bracelets

Did you know that one third of children who elope cannot identify themselves? Safety is of utmost importance for children with autism, especially when it comes to elopement or wandering behaviors. One simple yet effective tool that can provide peace of mind for parents and caregivers is a medical ID bracelet. Learn more about our medical ID program: <https://www.autismsocietyma.org/medical-id> and our tips for picking the right one: <https://www.autismsocietyma.org/blog/medical-id-bracelets>

Autism Society of MA Autism Emergency Sticker is a decal that alerts first responders that a person with autism lives in the home or rides in the vehicle and may have communication, sensory, or behavioral differences. The sticker is typically placed on front doors, windows, or other visible entry points so police, fire, and EMS can quickly recognize the need for an Autism-informed approach during an emergency. <https://www.autismsocietyma.org/autism-emergency-sticker>

Transportation

The RIDE is the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's ADA paratransit service for people whose disabilities make it difficult or impossible to use standard public transit. It provides door-to-door, shared-ride transportation within a service area that mirrors MBTA routes. Riders must apply and be determined eligible, and trips are scheduled in advance.

<https://www.mbta.com/accessibility/the-ride>

The MBTA offers reduced fares for people with disabilities, including adults with autism, through its Transportation Access Pass (TAP) program. Eligible riders can receive about 50% off fares on buses, subways, commuter rail, ferries, and express buses by providing disability documentation or verification from agencies like DDS or DMH. Reduced fares also extend to income-eligible riders enrolled in certain state assistance programs. TAP cards can be applied for online or in person, helping make public transit including The RIDE paratransit service.

<https://www.mbta.com/accessibility/the-ride>

MassMobility is a statewide initiative that connects individuals with disabilities (as well as older adults, veterans, and low-income riders) to transportation resources throughout Massachusetts. The program helps people identify available services, find rides, and learn about options like community shuttles, volunteer drivers, on-demand rides, and other accessible transportation programs. <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massmobility>

The Blue Envelope Program is a voluntary initiative in Massachusetts designed to make traffic stops and interactions with law enforcement safer and more comfortable for drivers with Autism. Participants can request a free, specially designed blue envelope to keep in their vehicle that holds important documents (like driver's license and registration) and displays communication tips for police officers, helping them understand how to adjust their approach when someone with autism is pulled over. The envelope includes guidance for both drivers and officers to promote calm, clear communication and to reduce stress and anxiety during a stop. The program is available at State Police barracks or by mail in Massachusetts.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/blue-envelope-program>

Disability Plates and Placards (Massachusetts): In Massachusetts, residents with qualifying disabilities can apply through the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) for special disability license plates or a disability parking placard. These allow drivers to use designated accessible parking spaces, park at meters without paying, and avoid some time limits, making it easier to travel to appointments, work, and community activities. Placards are available on a temporary or permanent basis and do not require owning a vehicle, while disability plates are attached to a vehicle you own and register. A licensed healthcare provider must certify the disability as part of the application process, and only one valid placard may be issued per person at a time.

<https://www.mass.gov/disability-plates-and-placards>

Higher Education

Massachusetts Inclusive Postsecondary Education (MAIPSE) is a statewide initiative funded and overseen by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education that expands access to inclusive college experiences for adults with Autism, intellectual disabilities, and other developmental disabilities who want to participate in higher education with support. MAIPSE supports partnerships between public colleges and universities, school districts, and adult disability service agencies, enabling eligible students to take classes, engage in campus life, participate in internships or paid work, and build skills in self-advocacy, independence, and career planning alongside their peers.

Students typically access MAIPSE through either an in-school pathway while still receiving transition services (usually ages 18–22) or an out-of-school pathway through adult disability services after exiting the K-12 system. The program uses person-centered planning to match supports with individual goals and helps ensure students can fully participate in academic, social, and community activities on campus.

MAIPSE has evolved through state regulations that require public institutions to create inclusive postsecondary opportunities allowing students with developmental disabilities to enroll in courses, join clubs, access campus resources, and develop work and life skills tailored to their interests and needs.

Examples of MAIPSE-affiliated programs in Massachusetts colleges include:

- Inclusive programs at Cape Cod Community College (MAIPSE/MAIHE) focusing on independent living and vocational skills
- Bristol Community College's Gottschall Access Program (GAP) offering coursework, life skills training, and internships
- Massasoit Community College's inclusive enrollment program for community coursework
- MassBay Community College Transitional Scholars providing coaching and transition support
- University programs like UMass Inclusive Learning and Salem State's Community of Inclusive Scholars that integrate academic, social, and employment experiences.

These programs help adults with Autism gain college exposure, build community connections, and increase independence, with supports layered to meet each student's unique goals.

Learn more about the program: <https://www.mass.edu/maipse/home.asp>



Autism Society Massachusetts

The Autism Awareness Card is a simple and effective way to share information about Autism with those around you. These printable cards are designed to help you quickly and easily explain Autism in various situations, whether at the grocery store, in a restaurant, or during community outings. You can print them at home or at a local print shop, and keep a few on hand to share whenever you feel the need to educate or raise awareness

I have Autism.

Autism is medical condition. It impairs my ability to communicate. As a result, I may have difficulty understanding your directions. I may be nonspeaking. I may get physically agitated if you touch me or get too close. Please speak calming to me and give me a minute to process.

 Autism Society www.autismsocietyma.org

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 Autism Society www.autismsocietyma.org



About Us

The Autism Society of Massachusetts is dedicated to empowering individuals with autism and their families by providing education, advocacy, and community support. Our mission is to create a more inclusive world where individuals with autism have access to the resources, opportunities, and understanding they need to thrive. With a commitment to lifelong support, we work to foster acceptance, improve awareness, and connect families and professionals with essential tools and information. Through collaboration and education, we strive to make Massachusetts a place where every individual with autism is valued, supported, and included.

Services



Information and Referral



Education and Training



Resource Guides



Awareness and Advocacy



Public Policy



Safety Resources



First Responder Programs