

FIRST OPTIONS

A guide for Families with a new Autism Diagnosis

This document has been created to provide parents with some guidance for first steps to take or options available when your child has just been diagnosed as being on the Autism Spectrum.

It has been created by other parents with children on the spectrum who have been navigating the world of autism support and services themselves for some time.

This information is provided to offer parents new to the diagnosis with some options. We recommend you look further into any of these or discuss them with your appropriate advisors before proceeding.

FIRST THINGS TO DO

- Contact ASPECT to learn about the various sources of information and supports available to you. www.aspect.org.au
- Look into whether you qualify for NDIS funding. www.ndis.gov.au
- Speak with your child's school about an Individualised Education Program (**IEP**). Whether your child is in public or private school this can be a valuable way to identify how the school can best support your child's educational needs. An IEP (Individual Education Plan), or sometimes called ILP (Individual Learning Plan), is a written document that outlines a student's specific learning needs and how those needs will be addressed within their educational setting
- If your child is at a daycare or preschool enquire about funding for an extra staff member who could assist in the classroom (note this might not necessarily be specialized one-on-one care).
- Make an appointment with your **GP** to discuss ongoing management, also find out about Medicare items (sessions with speech therapists, occupational therapists, etc.)
- Contact **Centrelink** regarding the Carers Allowance and/or Carer Payment
- Become a member of **Carers NSW** (free) to receive regular information on changes and options available www.carersnsw.org.au
- Find a local **support group**. These often run week days, week nights and weekends www.acnaustralia.org.au
- Remember to be patient and do not overload your child or yourself with too much therapy at a time. (Your child will not require all the therapies or programs listed here). This is a list of some of what is available; some of it would be of benefit to your child, but certainly not all of it.
- **Take some time out.** Do things you enjoy, either alone or with others whose company you enjoy, or ring someone, even if it is only for 5-30 minutes.
- Look into a **My Time** group in your area. These are designed to help carers find some time for themselves. <http://www.mytime.net.au/>

THERAPIES – OPTIONS

Some of the therapies you may wish to consider are listed below. Discuss with your medical advisor for what may be best suited to your needs, and remember that early intervention is encouraged but also plan for the future as well.

- **Speech Therapy**
- **Occupational Therapy**
- **Cognitive / Behavioural Therapy**
- **Socialising / Communication Courses**
- Physiotherapy
- Hydrotherapy
- Art Therapy
- Pet Therapy or Animal assisted therapy (AAT)

PROGRAMS

These are some of the most commonly used programs out there. They may be great for you or not your best option. Please look into each to determine what is best suited to your needs (i.e. check your service provider and seek feedback before choosing one).

- **Positive Partnerships** program provided by ASPECT. These are free 1-2 day courses. Alternatively, the individual modules can be completed online.
<https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/>
- **Building Blocks** Early Intervention Program for pre-schoolers
- **Family Advocacy** provide free courses regarding integrated education in a mainstream school setting – for both public and private education <https://family-advocacy.com/>
- **Cool Kids Program** - for management of anxiety. Make enquiries with your child's psychologist or contact Macquarie University for a therapist in your area.
- **DIR/Floortime**. A program where the parent, therapist and child spend much of the time interacting on the floor, encourages interaction through a play-based approach.
- **Relationship Development Intervention (RDI)**. This is a long term program that trains the parents/carers to be the child's primary therapists.
- Some ideas **to complement** the above programs include: Toy/Resources Libraries, PECS books/images, Social Stories, Visual Schedules, Sensory items, etc
- Also note some **other opportunities** to develop various skills such as: social skills through playgroups, specific interests such as hobbies, computer skills with electronic tablets (i-pad).

FUNDING OPTIONS

Funding options are always changing but we have listed some here to start with.

- **Autism Advisor Program:** Speak with an advisor at one of the autism support organisations in your state for up to date funding options available.
- **Medicare:**– GP Management Plans (GPMP). You need a referral from your GP to receive five services per calendar year for any of the following – physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, psychology.

- **Mental Health Care Plan:** You need a referral from your GP or Paediatrician to access up to 12 visits to a psychologist, clinical psychologist, social worker or occupational therapist within a calendar year.
- **Centrelink Payments:** Carer Allowance (child) is a supplementary payment for parents or carers who provide daily care and attention for children with a disability or severe medical condition at home. Carer Allowance (child) may be paid on top of [Carer Payment \(child\)](#) or other payments, such as [Age Pension](#). For more information about this payment go to www.centrelink.gov.au and search for carer allowance.
- **Carer Adjustment Payment:** May be eligible for up to \$10,000 from Centrelink but must apply within first two years of diagnosis. A one-off payment to support families in financial hardship after a catastrophic event affecting a child younger than 7
- **Carer's Allowance:** This is administered by Centrelink and assists Carers looking after a child or an adult with a severe disability and/or medical condition which requires much additional attention – Autism included.
- **Carer's Payment:** Carer's Payment is income and assets tested, similar to a full pension and difficult to qualify for. Web: <http://www.centrelink.gov.au> (Search for carer's payment)
- **Health Care Card:** The Health Care Card may entitle the holder to significant discounts on visits to the doctor (bulk billing) / filling scripts at the pharmacy and entertainment venues (e.g. Easter Show, Sea World). <http://www.centrelink.gov.au> (Search for health care card)

OTHER OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Support for siblings who are not coping ie they are stressed/depressed etc <https://siblingsaustralia.org.au/>
- Consider dietary changes eg Organic products, Casein &/or Gluten Free products, preservative free products, colour free products.
- Talk to your child's GP or The Allergy Clinic at Sydney's RPA Hospital.
- Social Stories. To help your child learn how to respond appropriately
- Purchase of toys/games/aides that assist the child eg. Pencil grips, communication games, things to aide gross/fine motor skills, time timers
- Biomedical testing. Discuss with your child's paediatrician
- Use of natural care products free of petro-chemicals. These can be purchased from chemists, health food stores and supermarkets.
- Medication: Can be used to treat behavioural problems such as ADD, anxiety and depression, and increase the effectiveness of other interventions. Speak with your medical advisors.
- Vitamins and minerals. Seek advice from your paediatrician or a Nutritionist. Supplementing with appropriate levels of vitamins and minerals has been known to bring about improvements.

Sensory Minds Inclusion Centre.

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