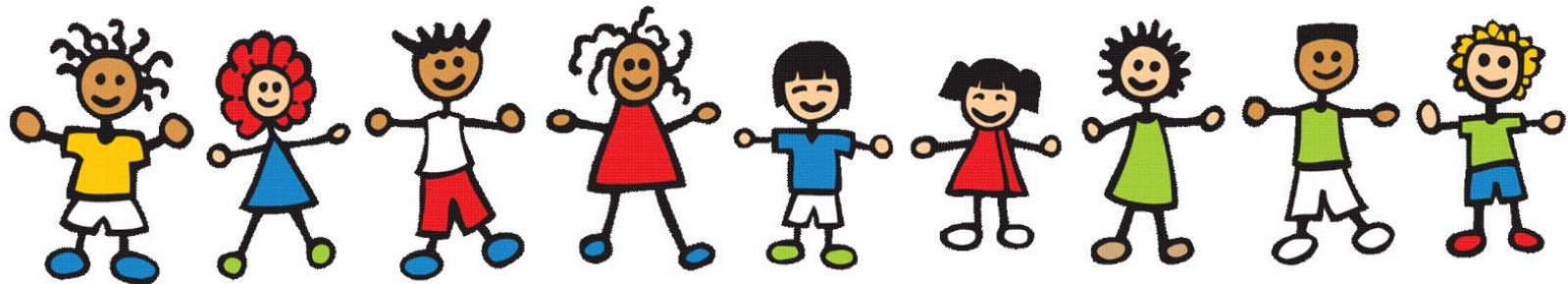


Resource Guide for Parents of Children with Special Needs



The purpose of this guide is to provide parents of children with special needs with resources that will assist in their child's overall development. This is by no means an exhaustive list of the available service providers, foundations, and support groups in your area but rather a tool for expanding your knowledge of some of the great programs that do exist. It is my sincere hope that this guide will connect families with helpful assistance when and where needed as it has with mine.

Sincerely,

Cindy Belk

Mother of a child with special needs and unique abilities

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Advocacy Groups and Service Providers

Autism Society of North Carolina Mecklenburg Chapter

Talk With Specialists - Autism Resource Specialists connect families to resources and provide training to help you become your child's best advocate. As parents of children with autism, they understand your concerns. Contact one near you: 704-894-9678 or 800-442-2762 <http://asnmeck.org/>

Autism Charlotte- Autism Charlotte's vision is to bring together the many threads of the Charlotte Community to help children and young adults impacted by autism achieve fulfilling, productive, and independent lives. Through reduced fees and need-based scholarships, Autism Charlotte makes it possible for children and families with limited income to participate in a variety of programs. <https://www.autismcharlotte.org/>

Autism Society of North Carolina - The Autism Society of North Carolina provides support and promotes opportunities that enhance the lives of individuals within the autism spectrum and their families. <https://www.autismsociety-nc.org/>

Autism Speaks - Autism Speaks funds programs that provide people with autism with social and educational experiences. - <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>

Guiding Parents to Service Smart Start of Mecklenburg County

Guiding Parents to Services (GPS) a program at Smart Start of Mecklenburg County is a navigational system offered free to families who are entering the world of autism. <https://smartstartofmeck.org/gps/>

Down Syndrome Association of Greater Charlotte – a nonprofit, family support organization. The goal of the DSAGC and its families is to enable individuals with Down Syndrome to reach their full potential and become respected members of their community. <http://www.dsa-gc.org/>

Easter Seals UCP North Carolina & Virginia

Have a wide array of services for children and adults with disabilities. - <http://www.easterseals.com/NCVA/> - Easterseals UCP Autism Services program at 704-522-9912

Advocacy Groups and Service Providers

Exceptional Children Assistance Center - ECAC is a private non-profit organization operated and staffed primarily with parents of children with disabilities and special health care needs. - <https://www.ecac-parentcenter.org/>

Extended Learning & Development Program (formerly Inclusion Afterschool)

Extended Learning & Development (ELD) is a creative service delivery model, made available in partnership with CMS and the YMCA of Greater Charlotte. This program integrates children with autism into typical afterschool and summer programs with their peers and offers a balance of educational and social learning; individualized skill development training; recreational opportunities; and personal support; with a 1 to 3 staff to affected child ratio. <https://www.autismcharlotte.org/eld>

Family Support Network of North Carolina - The Family Support Network of North Carolina enhances the lives of children who have special needs by providing support, education, and caring connections to their families. <https://fsnnc.org/>

First In Families of Mecklenburg County – Supporting people with developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injury and their families throughout North Carolina - <http://fifnc.org/>

North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program- The North Carolina Early Intervention Branch (NCEI) is a part of the N.C. Division of Public Health. It is the lead agency for the N.C. Infant-Toddler Program (ITP). The Infant-Toddler Program provides supports and services for families and their children, birth to three who have special needs. <http://www.bearly.nc.gov/>

NC Public Schools - Students with Disabilities The mission of the Exceptional Children Division is to assure that students with disabilities and those who are academically or intellectually gifted develop mentally, physically, emotionally, and vocationally through the provision of an appropriate individualized education in the least restrictive environment.- <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/exceptional-children-division>

Parents for Educational Freedom -a non-profit organization that advocates for quality educational options through parental school choice. <http://pefnc.org/>

Advocacy Groups and Service Providers

PATHS (Preparing Adolescents to Transition from High School)

Provides a supportive, integrative environment where high school students and recent graduates with Asperger's or related social-communication disorders can enhance their social/communication skills, obtain academic/educational support, and further develop their executive functioning. <https://www.autismcharlotte.org/paths>

TEACCH Autism Program - offers several treatment services for TEACCH clients and families of TEACCH clients. - <http://teacch.com/regional-centers/charlotte-teacch-center/treatment-groups>

The Arc of North Carolina -The Arc of North Carolina is committed to securing for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities the opportunity to choose and realize their goals of where and how they learn, live, work and play - <http://www.arcnc.org/>

Trusted Parents – Provides Support Groups, Workshops, IEP Advocacy and Summer Camps for special needs children and their families - <https://www.trustedparents.org/>

University Autism Outreach Program

The AC University Autism Outreach Program (University Program) connects local college students wanting experience with autism with families. <https://www.autismcharlotte.org/university-autism-outreach-program>

Grants and Scholarships

ACT Today Autism Care and Treatment - grants are designed to provide access to individuals and families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders. Grant payments will be made directly to pre-approved treatment providers, assessors or materials vendors. <http://act-today.org/act-today-grant-program.php>

Bee Mighty - Bee Mighty provides funding for medical therapy and equipment to Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) graduates - <http://beemighty.org/>

Children's Scholarship Fund-Charlotte - a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing educational options for children (grades K-8) from low-income families residing in Mecklenburg County - <https://csforegon.org/news/charlotte/>

Kids with Possibilities: - Up to \$1,000 grants and scholarships for children with developmental delays - <http://www.kidswithpossibilities.org/>

Small Steps in Speech - small Steps in Speech assists children with speech and language disorders by funding supplemental therapies and treatments for individuals as well as grants to charitable organizations who serve children with communicative disorders. - <http://www.smallstepsinspeech.org/>

The Orange Effect – Awards grants for speech therapy, and technology equipment - <http://theorangeeffect.org/>

The North Carolina Disabilities Grant Program pays for qualified expenses for children with disabilities attending an eligible nonpublic school setting, or in an eligible public setting where tuition is required. - <http://www.ncseaa.edu/CDSG.htm>

The North Carolina The Education Savings Account (ESA) - The Education Savings Account (ESA) is a program established by the North Carolina General Assembly that expands school choice for eligible students with disabilities in kindergarten through 12th grade. - <http://www.ncseaa.edu/ESA.htm>

United Healthcare Children's Foundation - UHCCF grants provide financial help/assistance for families with children that have medical needs not covered or not fully covered by their commercial health insurance plan. - <http://www.uhccf.org/apply/>

Online Resources

Magazines and Websites

- Charlotte Parent – <https://www.charlotteparent.com/special-needs/>
- Sesame Street - <http://autism.sesamestreet.org/>

Local Facebook Groups

- Special Friends Connection Charlotte Area
- Therapeutic Recreation - Meck County
- Matthew's Helping Hands – sponsors several special needs and sensory related program
- Mighty Moms for Special Needs- Charlotte, NC

Tool Kits

Charlotte Parent's Special Needs Resource Guide - Accessibility, advocacy + agencies, camps + recreation, education, health + therapy and support groups - <https://www.charlotteparent.com/charlotte-special-needs-resources/>

Big Red Safety Box - Red Safety Box is a free-of-charge toolkit given to autism families in need as a means to educate, raise awareness and share simple tools that may assist them in preventing, and responding to, wandering-related emergencies.
<http://nationalautismassociation.org/big-red-safety-box/>

100 Day Kit - Autism Speaks - The Autism Speaks 100 Day Kit for Newly Diagnosed Families of Young Children was created specifically for families of children ages 4 and under to make the best possible use of the 100 days following their child's diagnosis of autism. To download a free kit go to: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/100-day-kit>

Social and Recreational Groups

- Autism Society of Mecklenburg County - mecklenburgchapter@autismsociety-nc.org
- Autism Speaks – <https://www.autismspeaks.org/audience/school-age-children>
- Matthew's Helping Hands - www.matthewshelpinghandsnc.org
- Therapeutic Recreation Mecklenburg County - Recreation programs and camps for special needs children (2-21)
- Trusted Parents – community event calendar - <http://www.trustedparents.org/>.

Entertainment

Movies - AMC's Sensory Friendly Films for guests and families living with autism or other special needs. AMC is proud to partner with the Autism Society to offer unique movie showings where we turn the lights up, and turn the sound down, so you can get up, dance, walk, shout or sing! The Sensory Friendly Film program is available on the second and fourth Saturday (family-friendly) and Wednesday evenings (mature audiences) of every month. Please check your local theatre listings for specific showtimes - <https://www.amctheatres.com/programs/sensory-friendly-films>

Children's Theatre of Charlotte - Offers a sensory-friendly show for most of our Mainstage productions, adjusted for families and friends with children or adults on the autism spectrum or with other sensory sensitivities. These shows feature: Softened theatre lighting & sound, dimmed house lights that remain on, extra room in the house to move around as needed, quiet spaces and headphones, fidgets and other sensory objects. Click the link for more information - [Sensory Friendly Shows](https://ctcharlotte.org/Online/default.asp) or go to <https://ctcharlotte.org/Online/default.asp> and click Sensory Friendly Shows.

Additional Resources

Haircuts

- **Snipits** has a partnership with the Autism Society to train stylists to work with special needs children - <http://www.snipits.com/services/>
- **Pigtails & Crewcuts** - <https://www.pigtailsandcrewcuts.com/west-cobb/child-special-pigtails-crewcuts/>