



Autism roadmap

A guide for families to thrive in Indiana



Riley Children's Health
Indiana University Health

Navigating the road ahead after a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder can be challenging. This guide is designed to provide families in Indiana with a clear path to finding the right resources and support for your family. It covers a wide range of topics, from understanding the diagnosis to planning for your child's future. Whether you're just starting out or looking for more ways to support your child's needs, this guide connects you to local organizations, medical experts and financial help.



1. Understand the diagnosis

Review the diagnostic report: After your child is diagnosed, carefully read the report. Consider reaching out to your Riley Children's Health Developmental Medicine provider to discuss the results in detail.

Educate yourself: Learn about autism through organizations like the Autism Society of Indiana or the Indiana Resource Center for Autism. Attend workshops or webinars offered by Indiana Family to Family or Indiana Resource Center for Autism to better understand your child's needs.

Check out Riley's autism resources: Visit rileychildrens.org/health-info/autism for information on autism symptoms, diagnosis and treatment options.

2. Build a support network

Connect with local organizations: Several organizations provide support and resources for families of children with autism.

- **Autism Society of Indiana:** Visit autismsocietyofindiana.org or call **800.609.8449** for more information.
- **HANDS in Autism:** Visit handsinautism.iu.edu or call **812.856.1600** for more information.
- **Indiana Resource Center for Autism (IRCA):** Visit iirc.indiana.edu/irca or call **812.856.4722** for more information.

3. Access early intervention services (ages 0 – 3)

Look into First Steps: First Steps is Indiana's early intervention program for children under age 3, providing in-home support services such as speech, physical, occupational and/or developmental therapies. Anyone can make a referral, including parents. Visit in.gov/fssa/firststeps or call **800.545.7763** to ask about an evaluation for services.

Develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP):

Work with a First Steps service coordinator to create an IFSP tailored to your child's needs.

4. Explore educational services (ages 3 and older)

Transition to preschool services: If your child is receiving early intervention services (First Steps), your service coordinator will help in the transition to special education services through your school district. If your child is not receiving early intervention services, contact your local school district's special education department to begin an evaluation for eligibility.

Develop a plan for school services: Public schools are required to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Work with the school to determine if your child is eligible for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) outlining your child's educational goals, accommodations and services. Provide the school with your child's evaluation report, which should outline the assessment tools used, diagnoses and recommendations.

Seek additional support: IN*Source is a parent-founded organization offering special education liaisons, information and training to ensure effective education for children with disabilities. Visit insource.org or call **574.234.7101** for more information.

5. Access medical and therapeutic services

Look into Riley Children's services: Riley Children's provides a range of therapies and services for families.

- **Developmental Medicine:** Ongoing support and guidance for autism and related conditions
- **Speech Therapy:** Available through Riley Children's outpatient therapy services
- **Occupational Therapy:** Focuses on sensory integration and daily living skills
- **Behavioral Therapy:** Riley Children's offers Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, Early Start Denver Model, parent training and other behavioral interventions
- **Psychiatry and Psychology:** Address co-occurring mental health conditions like anxiety, ADHD or depression
- **Feeding Clinic:** For children with feeding challenges related to autism
- **Safety Store:** The Safety Store located in Riley Hospital for Children provides individual consultations with families in person, through video or over the phone. Visit safetystore.iu.edu or call **317.274.6565** for more information.

Look into community-based therapies: Important therapies for children can be found through other providers.

- **Speech therapy:** Addresses communication challenges
- **Occupational therapy:** Helps with sensory processing, motor skills and daily living activities
- **ABA therapy:** Helps with social skills and other functional skills. Check with your insurance provider for coverage. Use the Tips for Choosing an ABA Provider from the Indiana Resource Center for Autism (iirc.indiana.edu/irca).

6. Apply for financial and legal support

Apply for Medicaid waivers: Apply through the Indiana Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services. Learn more about waivers in the FAQ on Medicaid Waivers on the Indiana Family & Social Services Administration website (in.gov/fssa).

- **Family Supports Waiver:** Provides funding for respite care, therapies and other supports
- **Community Integration and Habilitation Waiver:** Offers additional services for individuals with developmental disabilities

Consider Supplemental Security Income (SSI): Provides financial assistance for children with disabilities. Check eligibility with the Social Security Administration (ssa.gov/ssi).

Reach out to Riley Social Work: Riley's social workers can help you apply for Medicaid waivers, SSI and other financial assistance programs.

Look into legal planning: Consider consulting an attorney and setting up a special needs trust or guardianship for your child's future.

7. Advocate for your child

Learn your rights: Familiarize yourself with IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Attend IEP meetings: Be an active participant in your child's education planning.

Document everything: Keep records of evaluations, IEPs, medical reports, applications for services, bills, insurance information and communications with service providers.

Explore Indiana Family to Family: Indiana Family to Family offers one-on-one support and training for families of children with additional health and education needs. Visit inf2f.org or call 844.323.4636 for more information.

8. Plan for transition to adulthood

Develop a plan with your child's school: Work with your child's school to develop a transition plan for post-secondary education, employment and independent living.

Ask about the Riley Transition Clinic: The Riley Transition Clinic serves teens and young adults with autism transitioning to adulthood. Call 317.944.4846 for more information.



Seek out Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Indiana's Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) can help with job training and employment support. Visit the VRS website (in.gov/fssa/ddrs/rehabilitation-employment) for more information.

Review resources for ongoing support: The Arc of Indiana provides resources about guardianship and other assistance. Visit arcind.org/future-planning for more information.

Consider adult services: Explore adult day programs, group homes or supported living arrangements if needed.

9. Take care of yourself

Look into respite care: Utilize respite services to take breaks and recharge.

Consider counseling: Seek counseling to manage stress and build coping skills.

Explore sibling support: Look into programs designed to support siblings of children with autism.

Remember self-care: Prioritize your physical and mental health to better support your child.

10. Stay informed and connected

Attend workshops and trainings: Check out organizations like IRCA and the Autism Society of Indiana.

Follow legislative updates: Stay informed about changes in policies and funding for autism services in Indiana.

Look for Riley research opportunities: Participate in autism research studies to contribute to advancements in treatment and support.

Check Riley's autism webpage: Regularly visit Riley's autism webpage (rileychildrens.org/health-info/autism) for updates on services, resources and events.



Content created April 2025 by Suzanne Gillies-Smith, graduate of the Indiana University School of Medicine Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Program. Clinically reviewed and approved by Riley Children's Health Developmental Medicine.



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