

**Resource Guide for Parents
and Families of Children
with Special Health Care
Needs in North Carolina:
*Disabilities, Special
Education, and Statewide
Resources***

Melanie Sadur

UNC School of Social Work and School of Public Health Dual Degree Student

LEND Fellow

(Contact: msadur@live.unc.edu)

What is this guide?

NC has many resources for the parents and families of children with special health care needs (CSHCN). This guide provides simple, easy to use, and important information on state and local resources for families, parents, and caretakers who have a child or children with a disability or special learning needs in North Carolina.

Who are Children with special Health Care Needs?

The Maternal and Child Health Bureau defines Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) as *"those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that*

*required by children generally."*¹

Who is it for?

This guide is intended for parents, family members, caretakers, school social workers, school counselors, teachers, principals, EC coordinators, and other school staff.

Service areas?

The information in this guide focuses on the Piedmont Region of North Carolina. The Piedmont region includes the following counties:

- Alamance
- Alexander
- Anson
- Cabarrus
- Caswell
- Catawba
- Chatham
- Cleveland
- Davidson
- Davie
- Durham
- Forsyth

- Franklin
- Gaston
- Granville
- Guilford
- Harnett
- Iredell
- Johnston
- Lee
- Lincoln
- Mecklenburg
- Montgomery
- Moore
- Orange
- Person
- Randolph
- Rockingham
- Rowan
- Stanly
- Stokes
- Surry
- Union
- Vance
- Wake
- Warren
- Yadkin

The information and resources included in this guide is not exhaustive. These are just SOME of the national, state, and local resources available.

¹
<http://www.schs.state.nc.us/data/champ/cshcn.htm>

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Children with Disabilities

1. Is your child having a hard time learning in school?

If your child has trouble learning in school, is not developing at the same rate as his/her peers, or has medical concerns that may affect his/her learning, you should do the following things:

1. Contact your child's teacher – Ask to meet with the teacher to discuss your concerns
2. Contact your school principal to learn about the special services your school provides
3. Contact local organizations to find information about disabilities and to connect with parents whose children have similar problems (more information on page 11).

2. Does your child have a disability?

If your child is having trouble learning, it doesn't necessarily mean that he or she has a disability. A disability may be one possible source of the problem, but there may be others:²

- The school's approach to teaching may not fit your child's academic needs
- Your child's previous learning may not have prepared him or her enough
- Cultural and/or language differences
- Attention difficulties, poor hearing, or vision problems

"In North Carolina, if the school feels that your child might have a disability that affects their ability to learn, the school is REQUIRED to attempt two different interventions before they consider your child for special education. Interventions are changes in the regular education program to try to solve some of the problems (moving the child's seat, writing a behavior contract, using a workbook, etc.)."³

Here are a few different ways that the school may provide assistance to your child **before** a formal evaluation for special education programs is considered:

- Early Intervening Services – School districts provide additional support for struggling students within the general education classroom.
- Reading First: A program designed to establish reading programs for students in kindergarten through Grade 3.
- Response-to-Intervention - A multi-step process that monitors how the student is responding to different types of services and instruction.

If these interventions do not improve your child's ability to learn, your child may be eligible for special education.

² <http://www.ncl.org/parents-child-disabilities/ld-rights>

³ <http://www.disabilityrightsn.org/sites/default/files/Parents%20Together%20rev%202014.pdf>

3. What is special education?

Special education describes the educational services that help children with disabilities learn. Special education may occur in inclusion classrooms (mix of students who do and do not receive special education services), self-contained classrooms (classroom that is only for students who receive special education services), or out-of-district placement (when the child needs more specialized support than the local school district can provide, the district will cover the cost to have the child educated in an appropriate out-of-district placement).⁴

If a teacher or parents thinks the child has one (or more) of the 13 disabilities listed in IDEA **AND** the child needs special education to make progress in school, the child will receive a formal **evaluation** to see if they are eligible for special education services. Once eligibility is determined, school staff will meet with the parent(s) to develop the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).⁵

4. 13 disabilities listed in IDEA:

(3 to 21 year olds may be eligible for special education services if they fall into any of these categories):⁶

1. **Autism:** Developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction
2. **Deaf-blindness:** Simultaneous hearing and visual impairments,
3. **Deafness:** Severe hearing impairment
4. **Emotional disturbance:** One or more of the following: 1. Inability to learn that is not due to intellectual, sensory or health factors. 2. Inability to maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers 3. Inappropriate behavior or feelings under normal circumstances 4. General unhappiness or depression. 5. Tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.
5. **Hearing impairment:** Impairment in hearing (may be permanent or fluctuating)
6. **Intellectual Disability:** Below average general intellectual functioning, existing at the same time with deficits in adaptive behavior
7. **Multiple Disabilities:** Combination of more than one impairment
8. **Orthopedic impairment:** Impairments of musculoskeletal system (bones, joints, nerves)
9. **Other health impairment:** Having limited strength or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome
10. **Specific learning disability:** Disorder in a psychological process involved in understanding or in using language, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to

⁴ <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/special-education-basics/understanding-special-education#item0>

⁵ <http://www.ncl.org/parents-child-disabilities/ld-rights>

⁶ http://www.parentcenterhub.org/wp-content/uploads/repo_items/gr3.pdf

listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do math (such as brain injury, dyslexia, perceptual disabilities)

11. **Speech or language impairment:** A communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment.
12. **Traumatic brain injury:** Injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both.
13. **Visual impairment** (including blindness): Impairment in vision

Your Children's Legal Rights in School

The United States has two important laws that protect the rights of children with disabilities. These laws are the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.⁷

1. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation, and provides a definition of “disability” for school districts to use. Under IDEA, children with disabilities are defined as those who experience developmental delays in one or more of the following areas:⁸

- Physical development
- Cognitive development
- Communication development
- Social or emotional development
- Adaptive development

Under IDEA, school districts must provide “free and appropriate public education” to children with disabilities, meaning all children must have access to general education and specialized educational services, and these services must be provided for free. In order to qualify for special education, the child must:

- Have one (or more) of the 13 disabilities listed in IDEA
- As a result of the disability, the child needs special education to make progress in school (the disability interferes with the child’s ability to learn in a general education classroom).⁹

2. Section 504:

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guarantees civil rights to individuals with disabilities. Under Section 504, individuals may not be subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability from any program receiving federal funding. A central tenet of Section 504 is free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for all children.¹⁰

IEP services and 504 Plan accommodations must be provided to children FOR FREE (at no cost to the parents).

⁷ <http://www.ncl.org/studentsdisabilities/iep-504-plan/is-504-plan-right-for-my-child>

⁸ http://www.parentcenterhub.org/wp-content/uploads/repo_items/gr3.pdf

⁹ <http://www.disabilityrightsn.org/sites/default/files/Parents%20Together%20rev%202014.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.learnnc.org/reference/Section+504>

Special Education Testing Process

1. Individualized Education Program:

If your child is eligible for special education services, the next step is to develop his or her Individualized Education Program, also known as an IEP. Your child's IEP lays out the school's commitment of special education and related services to be provided by the school district. An IEP must be developed within 30 days of eligibility determination and then must be reviewed annually as long as the student continues to be eligible for services. Special education and related services cannot begin until an IEP has been developed.

The next several sections will outline the process that children with disabilities go through in order to receive special education services.¹¹ The steps of the process are:

1. Screenings
 - Regular classroom teachers or parents collect information to decide if they should refer the child for special education testing
2. Referral (you must give your permission to test your child)
 - You or the school has a concern about your child's educational progress.
3. Evaluation
 - You give your permission for the school to test your child. (within 60 calendar days from the date you give your permission to test your child)
4. Identification
 - The IEP Team meets to review the results of the evaluations.
 - After the evaluation is complete, the IEP Team, **including the parent**, will meet to review the results and decide if the child qualifies for special education.
 - If the evaluations show that (a) your child has a disability and (b) your child needs special education services in order to benefit from school, the Team gives your child a category for services.
5. The Individualized Education Program Placement
 - The IEP team places your child into special services (within 30 days from when the evaluation was completed, and within 90 calendar days from the date of referral)
 - Placement is the actual amount of time that your child gets special education services. It is the end result of screening, referral, evaluation and the development of the IEP

2. Child's Rights in the Special Education Process:¹²

Your child has a right to:

- Be tested in the language which he/she speaks and understands best.
- Be tested in such a way that results are not affected by the child's race or culture.

¹¹ <http://www.disabilityrightsnc.org/sites/default/files/Parents%20Together%20rev%202014.pdf>

¹² <http://www.disabilityrightsnc.org/sites/default/files/Parents%20Together%20rev%202014.pdf>

- Be tested in a way that hearing, vision, mobility or speech disabilities do not lower the test scores.
- Be tested by qualified professionals using valid tests that are given according to proper instructions.
- Be evaluated by a group of professionals, including at least one teacher or specialist who is knowledgeable about the kind of problem your child is thought to have.
- Have his/her educational program determined on the basis of more than one test.
- Each child with a disability should be placed in a program as similar to a regular class as possible. This is the Least Restrictive Environment

3. Parent's Rights in the Special Education Process:¹³

- Parents must give written permission before the first evaluation can be given.
- Testing materials must not discriminate either racially or culturally.
- If parents feel that the evaluation does not contain enough or correct information, they have the right to an independent educational evaluation paid for by the local school district
- Parents are members of the IEP Team and must be allowed to participate in writing the Individualized Education Program.
- **Be given written notice of your legal rights in the language you best understand.**
- Give your written permission for the initial or first evaluation to decide if your child needs special education services, and for all re-evaluations. You have the
- Right to revoke your consent, or take it back, at any time.
- Be notified when your child is being tested individually with any tests that are not generally given to other students.

4. What if my child does not qualify for an IEP?

Children who do not qualify for special education under IDEA, may qualify for a 504 plan.¹⁴ The 504 Plan is a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives accommodations that will ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment. These services must be provided at no cost to parents. Under Section 504, no formal evaluation is required. The 504 Committee should look at grades over the past several years, teacher's reports, information from parents or other agencies, state assessment scores or other school administered tests, observations, discipline reports, attendance records, health records and adaptive behavior information. Schools must consider a variety of sources.

Unlike Special Education, the federal regulations for Section 504 do not require or even

¹³ <http://www.disabilityrightsn.org/sites/default/files/Parents%20Together%20rev%202014.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.washington.edu/doit/Stem/articles?52>

mention that parents are to be a part of the decision-making committee.¹⁵

Under Section 504, no formalized testing is required. The 504 Committee should look at grades over the past several years, teacher's reports, information from parents or other agencies, state assessment scores or other school administered tests, observations, discipline reports, attendance records, health records and adaptive behavior information. Schools must consider a variety of sources.¹⁶

¹⁵ <http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/legal-rights/868-section-504.gs?page=2>

¹⁶ <http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/legal-rights/868-section-504.gs?page=2>

North Carolina Resources

1. State organizations:

Exceptional Children's Assistance Center

- **Website:** <http://www.ecac-parentcenter.org> (Website in English and Spanish)
- **Phone:** 704.892.1321 or toll free 1-800.962.6817
- **Email:** ecac@ecacmail.org
- **Mission:** ECAC is a private non-profit parent organization committed to improving the lives and education of ALL children through a special emphasis on children with disabilities. They provide information, education, outreach, and support to and for families with children across the state of North Carolina.
- **Services:**
 - Assistance preparing for your child's IEP:
 - Would you like **assistance preparing for your child's IEP Meeting or need someone to attend with you?** If so, ECAC's IEP Partners can help. If you would like more information about requesting an IEP Partner, call: **1-800-962-6817** and ask to speak with a Parent Educator.
 - ECAC Parent Training and Information Center: All services are provided to parents and families at no cost! (<http://www.ecac-parentcenter.org/About-the-PTI.aspx?sid=17&pid=3&red=yes>)
 - Toll Free Parent Info Line answered by Parents
 - Individual Assistance with educational issues
 - Parent and Professional Education workshops on a variety of topics
 - Lending Library
 - Information packets, (paper and on CD)
 - NewsLine newsletter and ECAC Online!, our electronic newsletter
 - IEP Partners
 - Parent-to-Parent support
 - Assistance to parent groups
 - Parent trainings and workshops:
 - Schedule a FREE workshop in your area: Please contact Margaret Campbell at 1-800-962-6817, ext. 317.
 - Hispanic Outreach Coordinator:
 - Teresa Peña, Parent Educator, Hispanic Outreach Coordinator, 1-800-962-6817, ext. 324 tpena@ecacmail.org

Family Support Program:

- **Website:** <http://fsp.unc.edu>
- **Phone:** 1-800.852.0042- Speak with a resource specialist who can help you find the information you need.

- **Email:** FSP.CDR@unc.edu
- **Mission:** The mission of the Family Support Program is to promote provide support for families with children who have special needs
- **Services:**
 - All services are FREE and CONFIDENTIAL
 - Information and Referral - to link families, caregivers, and providers to information about disabilities and diagnoses; parent-to-parent and other peer support; local, state, and national resources
 - Find information about diagnosis and conditions

Family Support Network of North Carolina (FSN):

- **Website:** <http://www.fsnn.org>
- **Services:**
 - Put you in touch with other parents with similar experience
 - Provide a "listening ear"
 - Help you become a volunteer Support Parent
 - Connect you to resources in your community

NC Department of Health and Human Services:

- **Website:** <http://ncdhhs.gov/disabilities/index.htm>
- **Phone:** Children with Special Health Care Needs Helpline: **1-800-737-3028**
- **Services:**
 - Provides services, hotlines, and information for children and adults with disabilities.

The Arc of North Carolina:

- **Website:** <http://www.arcnc.org>
- **Phone:** 800-662-8706 (toll free) or 919-782-4632 (local)
- **Mission:** The Arc of North Carolina has been providing advocacy and services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities since 1953. The Arc believes that all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have strengths, abilities and inherent value, are equal before the law, and must be treated with dignity and respect.
- **Services:**
 - The Arc provides direct supports and services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) that enable people to lead full rich lives in the community.

Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities:

- **Website:** <http://www.ciddd.unc.edu>
- **Phone:** 919-966-5171

- **Email:** info@cidd.unc.edu
- **Mission:** The Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities is a comprehensive program for services, research, and training relevant to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.
- **Services:**
 - The CIDD provides an array of clinical services for children and adults who have or are at risk for developmental disabilities.
 - Clinical services: Assessment, consultation, and treatment options for individuals with behavioral, learning, and developmental needs across the lifespan.

TEACCH Autism Program:

- **Website:** <http://teacch.com>
- **Phone:** 919-966-2174
- **Email:** TEACCH@unc.edu
- **Mission:** The University of North Carolina TEACCH Autism Program creates and cultivates the development of exemplary community-based services, training programs, and research to enhance the quality of life for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and for their families across the lifespan.
- **Services:**
 - Autism Program provides clinical services such as diagnostic evaluations, parent training and parent support groups, social play and recreation groups, individual counseling for higher-functioning clients, and supported employment

Additional Organizations:

- LDANC (learning disability association of NC): <http://www.ldanc.org/home>
- NC Public Schools Exceptional Children Division- <http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov>
- Autism Speaks - <http://www.autismspeaks.org/site-wide/north-carolina>

2. County-specific organizations:

Family Support Network/HOPE

Service areas: *Catawba, Caldwell, Alexander, Burke, and McDowell counties*

Website: <http://www.fsnhope.org>

Phone: English: (828) 256-5202. Spanish: (704) 803-7082, Hmong: (828) 403-1286

Email: vbdieter@fsnhope.org

Mission; Family Support Network/HOPE provides support, information, and training to assist families in promoting the education, development, and quality of life for their children of all ages and with all types of special needs; and partners with parents and professionals on community, state, and national levels to expand opportunities and generate resources in order

to advance positive participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society.

Services:

- Parent to parent matching: Talk to a parent whose child has a similar disability or circumstances
- Referral information
- Parent support and training

GSF Family Support Services:

Service area:

- Anson, Bladen, Chatham, Cumberland, Durham, Franklin, Granville, Harnett, Hoke, Lee, Montgomery, Moore, Orange, Person, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland, Vance, Wake, Warren

Website: <http://www.gcffamilysupportservices.org>

Phone: 919-941-9600

Mission: GCF Family Support Services™ (GCF-FSS™) is dedicated to supporting, educating, and informing families of children with special needs

Services:

- Serving families with children of any age
- Parent mentoring
- Peer support groups, sibling support activities
- NICU family support
- Education to families of children with developmental and intellectual disabilities, chronic illness, other special needs or those who are born prematurely.
- Information and referrals
- Educational resources
- Educating and Supporting to Empower Parents

County-specific contacts can be found on the following website:

<http://www.gcffamilysupportservices.org>

Family Support Network Charlotte

Service Area: Mecklenberg County

Website: <http://www.fsnncc.org/node/13>

Phone: (704) 336-7173

Email: kelly@familysupportcharlotte.org

Services: This program offers support for families of children with special needs by providing a one-on-one parent match with a trained support parent for emotional support, assistance in finding community resources, and sharing parenting experiences.

Family Support Network of Central Carolina

Service Area: Alamance, Caswell, Guilford, Randolph, Rockingham

Website: <http://www.fsnncc.org>

Phone: (336) 832-6507

Email: support@fsncc.org

Services: Provides support and resources for families of children with: prematurity, developmental disabilities, chronic illness, and other special needs.

Family Support Network of Greater Forsyth

Service Area: Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, Yadkin

Coordinator: Gentry, Chris

Website: www.fsngreaterforsyth.com

Phone: (336) 924-5301

Email: CLGentry@wsfcs.k12.nc.us

Mission: The greatest asset that a child with special needs can have is a strong support system. We strive to strengthen families and to enhance the lives of children with special needs by working with all members of their families and the professionals who serve them.

Services:

- Services free of charge to family members of children with special needs as well as others who care for them, including guardians, professionals, and caregivers.
- Parent to Parent matching
- Hospital outreach
- Chat & Snack
- Sibshops
- Information & Referral
- Parent training

Family Support Network of Southern Piedmont

Service Area: Cabarrus, Iredell, Rowan, Stanly, Union

Website: www.fsnsnp.org

Phone: 980-522-8740

Email: ccranford@fsnsnp.org

Mission: Supporting families who have children who have children with special needs

Services:

- Parent to Parent matching
- Information & Referrals
- Sibling Support
- Support Groups
- Training for parents

The Centers for Exceptional Children

Service Area: Winston Salem, NC

- **Website:** <http://thecfec.org>
- **Phone:** (336) 727-2440
- **Mission:** The Centers for Exceptional Children operate as two campuses dedicated to

providing year-round programs for children with special needs. While serving more than 220 children between the ages of birth and eleven, The Centers focus a significant amount of attention on the needs each child and its family. Specific disabilities served include Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Spina Bifida, Rhett's Syndrome, traumatic brain injury and Cornelia deLang Syndrome. In addition to these named disability, a large population of children are significantly disabled with no specific diagnosis.

- **Services:**
 - Instructional programs: Adaptive Physical Education, Art, Music, Before and After School Care
 - Infant/Toddler program
 - Therapeutic services

3. Parent Support Groups:

Electronic Support Groups:

- **GCF Family Support Services™ – Google Group – Durham**
 - **Service Areas:** Chatham, Durham, Franklin, Granville, Orange, Person, Vance and Warren Counties
 - **Become a member:** <https://groups.google.com/d/forum/gcffss>
- **GCF Family Support Services™ – Yahoo Group – Pinehurst**
 - **Service Areas:** Anson, Harnett, Hoke, Lee, Montgomery, Moore, Richmond and Scotland Counties
 - **Become a member:** Send an email to gcffss-pinehurst-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
- **GCF Family Support Services™ – Yahoo Group – Raleigh**
 - **Service Areas:** Wake County
 - **Become a member:** Send an email to fsnwake-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

In-Person Support Groups:

GCF Family Support Services™

- **Website:** <http://www.familysupportonline.org/events-calendar/>
- **Information:** Registration is required for all the meetings so we can be prepared with materials. Childcare will not be provided for these meetings and events.
- **Locations:**
 - **Let's Connect – Durham:**
Contact Beth Hutson at 919-667-1067 or bhutson@gcffamilysupportservices.org
 - **Let's Connect – Fayetteville**
Contact Norma Stitt at 910-568-5503 or nstitt@gcffamilysupportservices.org
 - **Let's Connect – Franklin County**

Contact: Karen Troutner-Watkins at 252-430-0333 or katroutner-watkins@gcffamilysupportservices.org

- **Let's Connect – Pinehurst**
Contact Susan Fish at 910-420-1178 or sfish@gcffamilysupportservices.org
- **Let's Connect – Raleigh**
Contact Karen Hogan at 919-662-4600 ext 257 or khogan@gcffamilysupportservices.org

National Support Groups:

- Parent Support Groups: <http://www.childrensdisabilities.info/parenting/groups-childrensdisabilities.html>
- Our Kids - <http://www.our-kids.org>
- Birth to Three - <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/BirthtoThreeSupport/info>
- Child developmental delays- <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/childdevdelays/info>
- Parents of severely disabled kids- <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/ParentsofSeverelyDisabledKids/info>
- Christian Parents special kids- <http://www.cp-sk.org>
- Our special needs children - <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/OurSpecialNeedsChildren/info>

4. Legal and Dispute Resolution Resources:

Disability Rights NC – Pro Bono Legal services

- **Website:** <http://www.disabilityrightsn.org/pro-bono-legal-services-program>
- **Phone:** 919-856-2195
- **Email:** April Giancola at april.giancola@disabilityrightsn.org
- **Mission:** Disability Rights NC receives calls every day from people with disabilities seeking assistance. It is our goal to develop a group of volunteer attorneys who can provide legal services for callers when we cannot provide direct assistance.

NC Public Schools

- **Website:** <http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/parent-resources/dispute-resolution>
- **Services:** Dispute Resolution resources

Advocacy Institute:

Website: <http://www.advocacyinstitute.org/index.shtml>

Phone: 540-364-0051

Services:

Resources: <http://www.advocacyinstitute.org/resources/index.shtml>

Projects: <http://www.advocacyinstitute.org/projects/index.shtml>

Preparing for Special Education Mediation and Resolution Sessions: A Guide for Families and Advocates: <http://www.advocacyinstitute.org/resources/MediationResolutionGuide.shtml> The

Advocacy Institute and the Children's Law Clinic at Duke Law School have combined their talents to create this publication to help families and advocates make the most of the expanded dispute resolution options available in the latest version of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004).

IDEA State Complaint Resource Center:

Website: <http://www.advocacyinstitute.org/iscrc/about.shtml>

Mission: The IDEA State Complaint Resource Center is designed to provide parents, advocates and attorneys with information and resources to assist in using the State Complaint process effectively.

Health Insurance and Financial Benefits

Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) have numerous health insurance options in North Carolina, including:

- Medicaid (Health Check)
- NC Health Choice
- Affordable Care Act
- Private Providers

Children with special health care needs can be covered by more than one health insurance plan at once. Many children with special health care needs are covered under BOTH public insurance (e.g. Medicaid or Health Choice) AND private insurance at the same time, in order to cover more services.

Children with Special Needs Helpline: 1-800-737-3028

If you have questions regarding your child's eligibility for health insurance, or need help applying to health insurance, call the children with special needs helpline - 1-800-737-3028 (Open Monday-Friday, 8 AM – 5 PM).

1. Medicaid (Health Check):¹⁷

Medicaid is a health insurance program for low-income individuals and families who cannot afford health care costs. Medicaid serves low-income parents, children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Medicaid may help pay for certain medical expenses such as:

- Doctor Bills
- Hospital Bills
- Prescriptions (Excluding prescriptions for Medicare beneficiaries)
- Vision Care
- Dental Care
- Medicare Premiums
- Nursing Home Care
- Personal Care Services (PCS), Medical Equipment, and Other Home Health Services
- In-home care under the Community Alternatives Program (CAP)
- Mental Health Care

To be eligible for Medicaid, you must also:

- Be a U.S. citizen or provide proof of eligible immigration status. Individuals only applying for emergency services are not required to provide documentation of immigration status.

¹⁷ <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dma/medicaid/>

- Live in North Carolina, and provide proof of residency.
- Have a Social Security number or have applied for one.

How to apply: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dma/medicaid/apply.htm>

- You may apply at the County Department of Social Services (DSS) in the county where you live.
- You may apply online through the ePASS portal:
<https://www.epass.nc.gov/CitizenPortal/application.do>

2. North Carolina Health Choice:¹⁸

The North Carolina Health Choice (NCHC) Health Insurance Program for Children is a comprehensive health coverage program for low-income children. The goal of the NCHC Program is to reduce the number of uninsured children in the State. If your family makes too much money to qualify for Medicaid, but too little to afford private or employer-sponsored health insurance, your child(ren) may qualify for NCHC.

Health Choice for Children covers the following services:

- Case management and care coordination services
- Dental services
- Durable medical equipment and disposable medical supplies
- Emergency Services
- Family planning services
- Hospice care
- Home health care
- Immunizations (shots)
- Inpatient and outpatient substance abuse treatment
- Laboratory and radiological services
- Mental health services (inpatient and outpatient)
- Physician and clinic services (well-child and sick visits)
- Physical therapy, occupational therapy and therapy for individuals with speech, hearing and language disorders
- Prescription drugs
- Substance Abuse Services (inpatient and outpatient)
- Surgical services

Eligibility requirements:

Children must:

- Be between the ages of 6 through 18;
- Be ineligible for Medicaid, Medicare, or other federal government-sponsored health insurance;
- Be uninsured;
- Be in a family whose family income is above one hundred thirty-three percent (133%)

¹⁸ <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dma/healthchoice/>

- but no higher than two hundred eleven percent (211%) of the federal poverty level;
- Be a resident of this State and eligible under federal law; and,
- Have paid the Program enrollment fee required under this part.

3. Affordable Care Act:

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) signed into law on March 23, 2010, offers opportunities to close gaps in coverage for children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN).

You can shop for affordable health care plans at www.HealthCare.gov

The ACA health care plans offer tax credits, based on income and the cost of insurance, and tax credits are only available to people who are not eligible for other coverage, such as Medicaid/CHIP, Medicare, or employer coverage, and who are citizens or lawfully present immigrants

Benefits of coverage under the ACA:¹⁹

- Children cannot be denied enrollment or coverage of specific benefits because of a pre-existing condition.
- Children and youth up to age 26 who are not eligible for employment- based benefits are allowed to remain on their parent’s policy when a group health plan or health issuer offers coverage that includes dependent coverage, effective 2010.
- Exchanges provide an important avenue for coverage, including subsidies for the cost of coverage for families who previously were excluded or priced out of the market because of a child’s pre-existing condition, health status, or high utilization of services.

Private Insurance:

Your child may be covered under the insurance you receive from your employer. Contact your private insurance company to find out what services they will cover for your child.

4. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Children²⁰

Website: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/text-child-ussi.htm>

Phone: 1-800-772-1213.

- **WHO IS A "CHILD" FOR SSI?**
 - A person who is neither married (as determined by Social Security) nor head of a household and:
 - Is under age 18; or is under age 22 and is a student regularly attending school (as determined by Social Security).
- **HOW DOES THE SSI DISABILITY PROGRAM WORK FOR A CHILD?**

¹⁹ <http://hdwg.org/sites/default/files/ACAandCSHCNpaper.pdf>

²⁰ <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/text-child-ussi.htm>

- To be eligible for SSI benefits, a child must be either blind or disabled.
- A child may be eligible for SSI disability benefits beginning as early as the date of birth; there is no minimum age requirement. A child may be eligible for SSI disability benefits until attainment of age 18 (see definition of **disability for children**). When the child attains age 18, we evaluate impairments based on the definition of disability for adults (see definition of **disability for adults**). A child with a visual impairment may be eligible for SSI benefits based on blindness if the impairment meets the definition of blindness,
- **WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR A “DISABLED” OR “BLIND” CHILD?**
 - If under 18, whether or not married or head of household, the child has a medically determinable physical or mental impairment or impairments which result in marked and severe functional limitations; and The impairment(s) has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months or be expected to result in death; or If the child is blind, he or she meets the same definition of “blind” as applies for adults.