

# Public Services

## BIRTH–21 YEARS

### Special education (0–kindergarten)

Once a child has been identified as having a medical diagnosis of ASD he or she will likely be eligible for special education services. In Oregon, school districts have their own eligibility criteria, which sometimes can be different from medical criteria. This can be confusing so don't be afraid to ask the educational team questions. There are also statewide parent organizations that can help answer questions, such as FACT Oregon. The federal government mandates that all children with a disability receive a "free and appropriate education."

For children birth until kindergarten, most educational services are provided by the child's local Educational Service District (ESD).

- Children under three years old receive Early Intervention (EI) services (often in the home setting).
- Children between the ages of three years and kindergarten receive Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services (often in a preschool classroom setting).

For young children who qualify for Early Intervention and/or Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE), a team of professionals and the child's parents work together to come up with an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). This is a plan that helps the child learn strategies to be more successful at home and at school. This plan will include how the child is currently performing and the goals they will be working towards. Some of the things that ESDs may provide include:

- Speech therapy (speaking and using language, feeding, etc.)
- Occupational therapy (sensory, self-care, fine motor skills, etc.)
- Physical therapy (mobility or movement, gross motor skills, etc.)
- Behavioral therapy (transitions, play, behavioral regulation, etc.)
- Training for parents and families
- Social play groups

The Early Intervention programs can be very different from region to region. Some of the services will be provided in the home, others may be at a preschool or other location depending on the needs of the child and the resources of the ESD.

### **Special education services (kindergarten–age 21)**

Children between the ages of five and 21 receive special education services through their local public school district. These programs always include an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This is developed by a team of school professionals and the child's parents in order to decide what the child needs to be successful at school. The IEP is a plan that the school is required to have in place, and follow for each child with an eligible disability.

The range of services that may be provided by a school district is very broad, and depends on the needs of the child. Some children may benefit from being in a classroom with children who also have disabilities, while other children may do better if they remain in the regular education classroom (and some may do best with a combination of both).

It is very important that parents are involved in the decisions that affect the education of their child. Parents should be treated as equal partners in the education process. Sometimes parents have to advocate for different placements or interventions for their child that may not be obvious to other educators on the team.

