



Dear Parent, Guardian or Caregiver,

Welcome to our community of families with Autism!

The Howard County Autism Society (HCAS) is here to help by providing you with support, fellowship, and resources. HCAS serves over 5,000 people annually, including individuals with Autism of all ages, their family members, and members of the community who support them. More than 850 Howard County Public School students with Autism are part of the "HCAS family." We actively advocate for every one of these individuals with Autism throughout their lifespan. Please take advantage of all we have to offer you and your family!

As you and your child or family member adjust to receiving an Autism diagnosis, we would like to offer a few tips to help you navigate the journey. We know it can be overwhelming at first, but remember we are here for you and just a phone call or email away. Here is a list of resources to help you get started.

## Autism Resources

### Howard County Autism Society

1. Connect with HCAS families at **support group meetings**, webinars, and other events. Visit our website, [www.howard-autism.org](http://www.howard-autism.org), info on our programs and our calendar for info on upcoming events, <https://howard-autism.org/events/>.
2. Follow HCAS on **Facebook** for the most current information on resources and happenings, @HowardCountyAutismSociety, and connect with parents and caregivers by joining the Autism Parents of Howard County, Maryland group.
3. Become familiar with resources available through our national office, the **Autism Society of America**, <https://www.autismacceptance.org/>.

### Other Community-based Resources

1. The **Pathfinders for Autism** website offers an "Autism by Age" section as well as a database of resources and services searchable by topic and zip code, [www.pathfindersforautism.org](http://www.pathfindersforautism.org).
2. If your child is under age 4, read the "**100 Day Kit**" by Autism Speaks, [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org).
3. **Parents Place of Maryland** offers resources and training for families of children with a range of disabilities throughout Maryland, <https://www.ppm.org/>.
4. Are you a military family? Check out **Operation Autism** and the resources listed at <https://www.operationautisonline.org/>.
5. Does your child love to be active? **Special Olympics of Howard County** offers year-round sports and fitness opportunities for individuals ages 8 and up with intellectual and developmental disabilities and a Young Athletes program for ages 2-7, [www.somdhc.org](http://www.somdhc.org) or 410-740-0500.

## Special Education Resources

1. Check out the **Special Education Resources on our website** where you'll find up-to-date information on special education in Howard County and the State of Maryland, <https://howard-autism.org/special-ed-resources/>.
2. Look up the Maryland State Department of Education directories and publications for families of children with disabilities, including information on understanding the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process, <https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/Special-Education/FSS/index.aspx>.
3. Visit the Howard County Public School System's (HCPSS) **Family Support and Resource Center** for guidance with special education questions and concerns. Request the weekly e-newsletter. Contact Ann Scholz at [ann\\_scholz@hcpss.org](mailto:ann_scholz@hcpss.org) or 410-313-7161 or visit <https://www.hcpss.org/special-education/>.



4. Not a resident of Howard County? Consult this directory of public school special education **Family Support Services (FSS)** offices throughout the State of Maryland to find the FSS that serves your school system, <https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Education/FSDR/FSS/FSS%20Directory%20rev.01.12.2022.pdf>.
5. Attend a meeting of the **Special Education Citizen's Advisory Committee (SECAC)** and join the conversation between parents and the HCPSS Special Education Department, <https://howardcountyseac.com/> or contact [secacchair@gmail.com](mailto:secacchair@gmail.com). If you live outside of Howard County, get involved in the SECAC associated with your local school system.
6. Are you a Howard County resident and need one-on-one special education assistance? Contact HCAS to request a free session with our Special Education consultant, [info@howard-autism.org](mailto:info@howard-autism.org) or 410-290-3466

### Government Assistance

1. Register your child for the **Maryland Autism Waiver** right away. Children who qualify based on their disability receive services in their homes and communities as well as Medicaid *through* age 21. The wait list is 8+ years but can be worth it. Call MD State Department of Education at 410-767-1446 for more information.  
<https://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/waiverprograms/Documents/Autism%20Waiver%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>
2. Complete an eligibility application with the **Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)** to begin the process of applying to qualify for disability support services *after* age 21, <https://health.maryland.gov/dda>.
3. Twice a year through a lottery system, DDA awards \$2,000 grants to individuals/families. These **Low Intensity Support Services (LISS)** awards can be used for a wide variety of services, <https://health.maryland.gov/dda/Pages/liss.aspx>.

### 911 Flagging

Register your address with the Howard County Police and Fire and Rescue Department's **911 Address Flagging** program. Your online registration provides information specific to your child that will help first responders assist most effectively in the event of an emergency, <https://howard-autism.org/resources/911-address-flagging-program/>

### Insurance

Under Maryland law, insurance coverage for Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) is now part of many health insurance plans.

1. For information on insurance coverage for Autism-related services, visit the Pathfinders for Autism website at <https://pathfindersforautism.org/resources/understanding-insurance/> and the State of Maryland's [Parents' Guide to Habilitative Services](#).
2. Contact your insurance provider to review your insurance policy and its coverage of Autism services, such as ABA therapy, speech/language therapy, physical therapy and occupational therapy, as well as social/play groups.

This is just a small sampling of the resources available to you. Please feel free to contact our office if we may be of service to you and your family. Email [info@howard-autism.org](mailto:info@howard-autism.org) or call 410-290-3466.

Warm regards,  
Howard County Autism Society

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