

CHAPTER 6

Social Service Programs

Ohio Social Service Agencies

Several publicly funded social service agencies and many different programs provide services and supports to eligible individuals with ASD and their families. It can be difficult to determine what services are available and how to access them. This is a basic guide to the services in Ohio and how to directly contact the service provider. The information provided here is taken directly from the organizations' materials and websites.

An asterisk (*) identifies programs that provide financial assistance to families.

Help Me Grow

Help Me Grow is Ohio's statewide system for funding and coordinating early intervention services for children 0-3 years of age. *Help Me Grow* works collaboratively with each county's Family and Children First Council (see below) to ensure that families have access to community-based, family-centered services. The *Help Me Grow* program was designed to serve expectant mothers, newborns, infants and toddlers up to 3 years of age, and their families to promote the health and well being of Ohio children. To find out about services in your county, contact *Help Me Grow* at (800) 755-4769.

Family and Children First Council

The Family and Children First Council (FCFC) is a partnership of government agencies and community organizations working together in every county to provide services necessary to improve the well being of children, youth, and families. FCFC is the county agency that includes the *Help Me Grow* program and is responsible for coordinating all early intervention services for infants and children 0-3 years of age. A service coordinator is hired by each county FCFC to help families identify and access the services they need. Services include screening and diagnosis, health services, and individual and family supports. Services offered can differ from county to county.

Contact the governor's office of Ohio Family and Children First at (614) 752-4044 to get the FCFC phone number in your county.

Ohio Department of Health – Early Intervention Services

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) receives federal funds from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to organize and provide early intervention services for infants and toddlers, with disabilities (0-3 years of age), and their families. ODH uses these funds to support local agencies (Family and Children First Councils [FCFC] and the *Help Me Grow* program) to provide family-centered services.

Services can include assessments and evaluations by child development specialists, physical, occupational or speech therapy, and/or family services from social workers or case managers. Services are accessed through the county Family and Children First Council and are determined by an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP).

The IFSP is a plan developed jointly by parents and service providers. It describes the family's strengths and needs related to supporting the development of an infant or toddler, lists desired outcomes for family services, and identifies the resources and services necessary to achieve the outcomes.

To get the number of your local *Help Me Grow* program, call (800) 755-4769 or check the website at <http://www.helpmegrow.ohio.gov>

Address: Ohio Help Me Grow, 246 North High Street, P.O. Box 118, Columbus, OH 43216-0118.

Bureau of Services for Children with Medical Handicaps (BCMh)

The Bureau of Services for Children with Medical Handicaps (BCMh) is charged with ensuring that children with special health care needs and their families receive comprehensive, family-centered care. The program promotes early identification of children with special health care needs and treatment of those children by appropriate health care providers.

BCMh provides funding for services, diagnosis, and treatment of children with conditions that are *medically eligible*. At this time, autism spectrum disorders are not considered medically eligible for year-to-year treatment.

Children with ASD often have medically eligible conditions like seizures, hearing loss, and gastrointestinal problems. BCMh can cover the treatment of these chronic medical conditions, even though it does not cover the treatment of ASD. However, parents can obtain a three-month diagnostic enrollment for their child that will pay for testing and assessment services from a BCMh-approved provider.

This three-month period can be extended up to nine months to ensure that comprehensive evaluation services are completed. This diagnostic enrollment can allow parents to access the evaluation services of knowledgeable ASD diagnostic professionals. The diagnostic enrollment requires a referral from an appropriate medical professional.

Parents can identify BCMh providers by visiting the Ohio Department of Health website: <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhPrograms/cmh/cwmh/bcmh1.aspx> Click on: Locate BCMh Providers by County, located down middle of page. An Ohio map will appear, and you can click on your county to see a list of BCMh providers in your county. You can also check the county where your doctor's office is located. (You are not required to use a provider in your county.) For general information about the program, contact the BCMh office at (614) 466-1700 or toll free at (800) 755-4769.

***Women, Infant and Children Program (WIC)**

WIC is the special supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children that helps income-eligible pregnant and breastfeeding women, women who recently had a baby, and infants and children up to 5 years of age who are at health risk due to inadequate nutrition. The program improves outcomes of pregnancy by providing or referring women to support services necessary for full-term pregnancies; reduces infant mortality by reducing the incidence of low birth weight (infants under 5-1/2 pounds are at greater risk of breathing problems, brain injuries, and physical abnormalities); and provides infants and children with a healthy start in life by improving poor or inadequate diets.

WIC provides nutrition education, breastfeeding education, and support; supplemental, highly nutritious foods; referral to prenatal and pediatric health care and other maternal and child health and human service programs (examples: Head Start, Medicaid and Food Stamps).

For more information, contact the WIC Program at (614) 644-8006 or email OHWIC@odh.ohio.gov

Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities

The County Boards of Developmental Disabilities (CBDDs) are responsible for educational and vocational services for people with intellectual disability and developmental disabilities (DD).

Eligibility for services is determined through evaluation by a service coordinator at the request of a parent.

An assessment will be conducted, called the Children's Ohio Eligibility Determination Instrument (COEDI), to determine eligibility for DD services. If your child has not already received an official diagnosis, you will be asked to offer documentation of your child's suspected delays when requesting a determination.

Contact your county DD office and ask to speak to an intake worker to find out what services are offered. Families will get information about the waiver system from their assigned county Services and Supports Administrator (SSA) after they have enrolled with the county DD agency.

At the age of 16, an individual must be re-qualified for DD services as an adult. If the person with an ASD has not been placed on a waiver waiting list by that time, make sure to do this.

County boards can provide education, employment, and support services to children and adults of all ages. The DD system in Ohio operates with local, state, and federal funds. Services offered can differ according to each county.

Services provided by the DODD can include:

- **Intake and assessment services** – provided to determine if individuals meet the eligibility requirements for DD services.
- **Service coordination** – provided to link individuals to needed supports and to coordinate services. Service coordinators assess individual needs, arrange for services, and monitor the provision of those services on an annual basis or more frequently if necessary. Service coordinators also assist families with questions, planning, or referrals on subjects such as Social Security, guardianship and family support services.
- **Early childhood services** – provided for children under the age of 6 who have developmental delays, disabilities, or intellectual disability.
- **School-age services** – provided for students who have multiple handicaps, ranging in age from 5 through 21, in conjunction with local school districts.

- **Vocational services** – provided through sheltered workshops or programs that support community placement.
- **Residential services** – provided through group homes, supported living apartments, and various community living arrangements.
- **Respite services** – (or short-term residential care) provided for families in their homes or at an approved respite facility. Generally, respite care is provided anywhere from four hours to two weeks at a time.
- **Family resources** – funds provided to support families with a member who has a developmental disability for family-identified uses. Funds can covers the expenses related to such things as attending a conference or training event. Funds are limited, and families must have prior approval.

Waivers

Medicaid home- and community-based waivers allow states to provide Medicaid funding to pay for services for children with disabilities *without* considering family income for eligibility. Waivers were developed to direct funds that previously would have been spent to support an individual with a disability in an institution to supporting that individual in the community.

The county board of DD administers Ohio’s Medicaid waiver programs for individuals with disabilities. Funding for waiver programs is provided with state and federal Medicaid dollars, and the local board of DD must provide a local match to use those funds. Services across counties may differ based on the amount of county match dollars available.

Access to waiver funds is also restricted by the number of “slots” made available annually to each county by the state. Therefore, funding available both at the state and the county level will affect the number of individuals who can access the waiver. As a result, not all individuals who are eligible receive waiver funding. County boards of DD must maintain waiting lists to distribute the waiver slots available in their county on a first-come, first-serve basis. Obtaining a waiver for in-home support does not necessarily mean that there will be 24-hour supervision. The goal of the waiver program is to teach individuals skills that will allow them to live more independently. (There are exceptions for emergency situations, such as the illness or death of a caregiver.)

There are two basic waiver programs for which your child may qualify. This information is basic. For more details, request brochures from the Ohio Board of DD at (877) 464-6733 about the waiver program. Also, talk to other families who have received waivers to learn more.

- **Individual Options Waiver (IO Waiver)**

The IO waiver can cover a broad range of in-home and community support services for individuals with intensive needs. The individual must meet the level-of-care-requirements for an intermediate care facility for intellectual disability.

For more information about the IO waivers, call the number above or go to: <https://doddportal.dodd.ohio.gov/INF/finditfast/publications/Documents/IO%20Waiver%20Handbook,%20New%20Rev.%207-15-11.pdf#search=Individual%20Options%20Waiver%20Handbook>

- **Level 1 Waiver**

The Level 1 Waiver provides for a more limited range of services and has a \$5,000 per year limit for services such as respite care and homemaker/personal care. There is a \$6,000 limit to cover environmental modifications, specialized equipment and supplies, and a personal emergency response system. There is an \$8,000 limit over three years for emergency assistance, if required.

Because the waiting lists are very long, it may be years before your child is approved for waiver funds (large counties have waiting lists of over 1,000 individuals). Parents are encouraged to get their child on the waiting list as early as possible. Exact services to be covered by the waiver can be determined at the time the child is eligible. Contact your County Board of DD now to enroll your child and place his/her name on the waiting list in your county. It is an opportunity, not a commitment to a particular program or service.

Your service coordinator at the county board of DD can guide you through the application process for waiver eligibility.

For more information on the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and the County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, call toll free (877) 464-6733, or check at dodd.ohio.gov

Background on Waivers

Parents are frequently asked by well-intentioned people, “Does your child have a waiver?” The first thing the parents might say back is, “What do you mean, a waiver?” In the state of Ohio, a waiver refers to one of several federally funded programs that use Medicaid funds. All waivers are governed by state departments to provide funds to particular individuals such as retired elderly individuals, medically involved children, disabled adult citizens, and disabled children under the age of 18. There are income eligibility requirements to determine whether an individual is eligible for Medicaid funding.

In the case of waivers, the income of the family with whom the individual lives is not taken into consideration to determine eligibility; that is, the state *waives* the family’s assets as a factor in determining need.

Only the individual’s income, savings, and other assets are considered. The individual’s needs are the basis for which funds and services are granted.

In Ohio two state agencies, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) and the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS), govern waivers for adults and children with disabilities. DODD governs the Individual Options Waiver and Level 1 Waiver. (See section on DODD.) In both cases, the county boards of DD oversee their use and administration.

ODJFS governs the Transition Waiver. It uses the Carestar agency to administer the waiver and provide service coordination to families.

Originally, the Transition Waiver was called the Ohio Home Care Waiver, and it was designed to support families with very ill and/or medically fragile children who would otherwise need to be hospitalized or live in a nursing home. It was determined that for these children, medical needs, not a developmental disability, should determine the funding source for the waiver funds. This waiver strand is governed by ODJFS.

Some children with ASD were awarded these waivers, even though they did not have serious medical needs. This was because these children had very urgent needs (safety issues, serious sleep disorders, and behavioral problems that required specific therapy) but not *medical* needs (feeding tubes, catheters, and breathing machines). Because of the waiting list for IO waivers, these children were not going to receive support for years.

During a routine federal review of Medicaid expenditures, the state of Ohio was told that the Ohio Home Care Waiver was not being administered according to federal guidelines. As a result, ODJFS could no longer accept children who did not meet the original medical guidelines for the waiver.

Children who were already receiving services under the ODJFS waiver, but who met the guidelines for the IO waiver under the DODD, were transferred to a new type of waiver under the ODJFS called the Transition Waiver. The families receive all the benefits that they had been receiving when they were accepted under the Ohio Home Care Waiver. Eventually, these children should be transferred to the IO waiver.

How Do I Get a Waiver for My Child?

You cannot begin the process of obtaining a waiver without a service coordinator through your county board of DD. (However, you can be placed on the waiting list at intake without a service coordinator.) The process is rather complicated, and it is not the intent to cover this in detail here. Your service coordinator's will take you through all the steps for obtaining a waiver, beginning with determining eligibility. Not everyone who applies for a waiver will receive one. Be sure to appeal the decision if you are denied a waiver.

What Does My Child Receive with a Waiver?

Depending on the type of waiver your child is eligible for, you may receive approval to hire care providers for respite services or a provider to act as an aide for daily living. You may hire care providers through an agency or use someone who is an independent provider. You may also be approved to receive psychological services, therapies, and some kinds of safety equipment. If your child is approved for a waiver, she will receive a Medicaid card that can be used to supplement your existing medical insurance or cover expenses for a child who has no insurance.

Ohio Department of Mental Health

The Ohio behavioral health care system is organized into three levels or tiers:

1. state level
2. county level
3. board level

At the state level, there is the Ohio Department of Mental Health. This state agency certifies, monitors, and funds not-for-profit and for-profit agencies that provide services directly to the consumer. Planning, funding, and contracting with the provider agencies is managed at the county level by county mental health boards.

In some counties, the mental health and alcohol and drug addiction boards are combined into one organization. The boards do not provide any direct service to the consumer. Instead, they contract with agencies to provide these services

Statewide Coordinating Center for Excellence in Dual Diagnosis

The Ohio Coordinating Center for Excellence in Dual Diagnosis is a statewide project funded by a three-year grant to improve services to individuals with a mental health diagnosis along with intellectual disability. The project has established a partnership of university programs and children's hospital programs. In addition, the statewide effort has resulted in some county boards of mental health and county boards of DD joining efforts to provide training, increase knowledge, and improve services to this population.

The partnership of the DODD and the Mental Health Department is working to develop: (a) four regional training programs where identified systemic and clinical best practices will be presented; (b) a series of consultative mini-grants to foster collaboration at local levels across the state to increase service capacity; (c) consultative services in Ohio for clinicians treating individuals with dual diagnosis; and (d) research efforts and identification of other funding sources to expand systemic and clinical best practices for individuals with dual diagnosis living in Ohio.

Check the following website to find out if your county boards are participating in this program:
<http://dodd.ohio.gov/Initiatives-and-Partnerships/Pages/CCOE.aspx>

Coordination of Services

The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Ohio (NAMI Ohio) has created a booklet to guide families in accessing services from multiple Ohio agencies. The booklet may be downloaded from <http://www.namiohio.org/images/publications/Publications/ServiceCoordination200601111.pdf>

If you do not have access to the Internet, call NAMI Ohio toll free at (800) 866-2646 to request a copy of the service coordination guide.

Ohio Jobs and Family Services

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) develops and oversees programs and services designed to help Ohioans become independent through education, employment, job skills, and training. ODJFS programs help to ensure a safe and healthy environment for individuals and families who need help caring for their basic needs due to temporary or on-going situations.

The state ODJFS works with county departments of job and family services, county child support enforcement agencies, county public children's services agencies, and other community organizations to provide social service programs for families. The goals of the programs are to strengthen families, protect children, and provide children with opportunities for a better life.

Support programs offered through the ODJFS are listed below.

For a guide to all these programs, contact the ODJFS at (877) 852-0010 or (614) 466-2100 or visit their website: <http://jfs.ohio.gov>

To find the number for the office in your county, view your county contact information at http://jfs.ohio.gov/County/County_Directory.pdf

If you do not have access to the Internet, contact the ODJFS at (877) 852-0010 or (614) 466-2100 to request the phone number of your local office.

Support Services

*The **Disability Financial Assistance** (DFA) program offers cash to individuals who meet eligibility requirements, including one of the covered categories. An individual may receive assistance if he or she is: disabled as determined by ODJFS or at least 60 years of age and in receipt of DFA as of June 2003. The most cash one person can usually receive on DFA is \$115 a month. An individual must apply at his or her county job and family services office to receive DFA.

The **Emergency Food Assistance Program** and the **Commodity Supplemental Food Program** are two of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food distribution programs. They provide surplus and price-supported agricultural goods to state agencies. ODJFS uses food banks to distribute food. Eligibility is based on federal income guidelines. To access this program, contact your county office of jobs and family services.

*The **Food Stamp Program** helps people with low incomes obtain nutritious food. Food stamp benefits are issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture through county Jobs and Family Services Departments and are used to purchase specific staples and grocery items at participating grocery stores. Food stamp benefits are dispersed through an electronic benefits transfer system. Thus, at the grocery store checkout counter, the amount purchased is deducted electronically via a plastic card from the individual's or family's total monthly allotment of food stamp benefits. Eligibility, determined by the county Departments of Jobs and Family Services, is based on federal guidelines, including income, resources, and household size. Contact your local office to access the food stamp program.

Ohio's Best Rx is a statewide prescription drug discount program designed to lower the cost of prescriptions for Ohio residents who have no prescription drug coverage. Applicants under the age of 60 cannot earn more than 250 percent of the federal poverty guideline while those age 60 and over are not subject to any income restrictions. The goal of Best Rx is to improve access to needed medications at a reduced cost through a statewide network of participating pharmacies. Spanish, Somali, and large-print applications are available. A mail-order delivery option is also available. For more information, visit www.ohiobestrx.org or call toll free at (866) 923-7879.

Ohio Works First (OWF), part of Ohio's **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families** (TANF) program, initially provides time-limited cash assistance to eligible needy families for up to 36 months. During that time, county Departments of Jobs and Family Services provide support to adult participants to become job-ready, obtain necessary job skills, and find employment.

After 36 months, families are ineligible for further cash payments, unless the county Jobs and Family Services office approves an extension of benefits. Three kinds of extensions are offered: state hardship, good cause, and federal hardship. There is a federal 60-month limit on TANF benefits; however, a county office of job and family services can approve a “federal hardship” extension. Applications and eligibility determinations for Ohio Works First are completed at county job and family services offices.

The **Prevention, Retention, and Contingency** (PRC) program is designed to assist low-income families with the necessary resources to:

- Prevent families from having to apply for OWF cash assistance when crises arise.
- Help family members retain employment by enhancing job skills, overcoming barriers, and providing short-term assistance or wage-supplementing wages, if necessary.
- Provide for contingent needs by helping families with one-time urgent problems that, if left unattended, could result in families needing long-term public assistance. Examples of family-related PRC services include family preservation/support services (including counseling); family reunification services (when children have been removed from the home); family planning/clinical services; and shelter and personal/family support services in instances of domestic violence.

Health Care

Medicaid is a state and federally funded health care plan administered by the ODJFS. Medicaid provides health care coverage to low-income and medically vulnerable people of all ages. More than \$11.1 billion of the annual ODJFS budget goes to the Medicaid program to provide health care to lower-income, elderly, and disabled Ohioans. The Medicaid Consumer Hotline can answer general questions and is open evenings and weekends at (800) 324-8680 (TTY 1-800-292-3572). More information about eligibility, services, and programs may be found at <http://medicaid.ohio.gov>.

The **Hospital Care Assurance Program** supports hospitals that provide health care to low-income patients who cannot pay their hospital costs. Ohioans whose income is at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty guideline are guaranteed hospital services free of charge. Each hospital is responsible for administering this program. Ask your local hospital for more information.

The **Disability Medical Assistance Program** (DMA) is state and county funded and provides basic outpatient medical coverage, most notably prescription drugs, for people with very low incomes who are medication-dependent. DMA is available to certain persons ineligible for federally supported public assistance programs. Consumers must apply at the local county office of Jobs and Family Services.

For a program guide of all the programs listed here, contact the ODJFS at (800) 852-0010 or (614) 466-2100 or visit jfs.ohio.gov/

If you do not have access to the Internet, contact the ODJFS at (800) 852-0010 or (614) 466-2100 for the phone number of your county jobs and family services office.

Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), and Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI)

The Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission is Ohio's state agency that provides vocational rehabilitation services through the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) and the Bureau of Services for Visually Impaired (BSVI). The focus of these services is to help people with disabilities become employed and live independently.

Eligibility is based on three factors:

- A physical, mental, or emotional impairment creates or results in a substantial barrier to employment
- Vocational rehabilitation services will benefit employment outcome
- Services must help an individual get and keep a job

Through local offices, OOD and BSVI provide services leading to employment for people with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities. Parents can work with school personnel and their DODD service coordinator to refer their son or daughter for services from OOD/BSVI at the age of 16. Sometimes a rehabilitation counselor will attend IEP meetings to coordinate transition services prior to graduation to prepare the student for work.

Once a referral is made, an initial interview is set up between the individual and a professional rehabilitation counselor. A friend or family member can be present at the interview to help answer questions about the individual's skills and interests. The counselor will talk with the individual about career plans and the services needed for employment.

BVR services can include:

- continuing education or specialized job training, including supplies and books
- work adjustment training
- tools and equipment, including assistive technology or adaptive devices/low-vision aids that enable a person to work
- on-the-job training
- job placement and follow-up

An individual plan for employment will be developed by the counselor and the individual to identify the services to be provided through OOD/BSVI. The OOD/BSVI counselor will be involved throughout the implementation of the plan and will monitor the individual's progress. The implementation of the plan may take from several months to several years.

OOD/BSVI can also provide assistance to help maintain a job. For example, the counselor can work with the individual and the employer to determine the services necessary for the job placement to be successful. In addition, a rehabilitation counselor can identify employment support programs that will allow an individual to protect access to Medicaid services. Individuals can also use their earnings to fund needed supports for employment, such as job coaches, in order to maintain employment.

For more information, contact OOD toll free at (800) 282-4536 or visit <http://ood.ohio.gov>

Ohio Department of Education and Local School Districts: Educational Services

Your local school district is responsible for providing a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities ages 3-21 in accordance with IDEA. This includes preschool programming for students 3-5 years of age who are eligible, and special education school services for eligible students ages 5-21. Eligibility for services under the IDEA is determined through a Multi-Factored Evaluation (MFE) conducted by the school at no cost to the parent. (See Chapter 5.)

Your local school district is also responsible for evaluation and identification of children with disabilities even prior to the age of 3 years (a process called Child Find). The purpose of this requirement is to ensure the earliest possible identification of children who may benefit from early intervention or early education services. (See also, the Ohio Department of Health and *Help Me Grow* sections in this chapter.)

Preschool Special Education Programs

Your local school district is responsible for providing preschool special education programs for eligible children with disabilities from 3-5 years of age. Eligible children include those identified as having a deficit in one or more of the following areas: communication, vision, hearing, motor skills, social emotional/behavioral functioning, self-help skills, and/or cognitive skills.

Deficits can be identified through the Multi-Factored Evaluation (MFE) process conducted by local school districts to identify eligible children for special education (see Chapter 5).

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) is responsible for ensuring and overseeing local school districts' compliance with the IDEA regarding special education programs for preschool children with disabilities.

Procedures have been identified to guide the transition of children with disabilities from early intervention services to preschool special education services. The Individual Family Service Planning (IFSP) teams and the local school district are required to begin planning for the transition to preschool special education services six months before the child's third birthday. Parents participate in planning for this transition to preschool special education services. (See Chapter 5 for more information about how to access special education services for your child.)

Autism Scholarship Program

The Autism Scholarship Program is operated by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to provide funds of up to \$20,000 to parents of a qualified child with ASD. The autism scholarship program gives parents the choice of declining the local school district's proposed special education program by placing their child in an out-of-district or private school program.

Parents can choose a special education program provided by an ODE-approved autism scholarship provider to receive the services outlined in the child's IEP. A list of approved providers is located on the ODE website.

Ohio follows the federal definition of autism, a definition that was meant to be inclusive of pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified, autism, and Asperger Syndrome. Children are eligible for the scholarship if they are identified by the local school district under the category of autism.

To find more information on the Autism Scholarship Program, see the Children with Disabilities portion of the ODE website. Scroll down to the middle of the page to see the autism scholarship heading. www.ode.state.oh.us

If you do not have access to the Internet, call The Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI) toll free at (866) 886-2254 to request a copy of the autism scholarship information.

Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI)

The Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI) serves families, educators, and professionals working with students with autism and low-incidence disabilities. It is a statewide project under the direction of the Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children (ODE-OEC).

OCALI serves as a statewide clearinghouse for information about ASD. OCALI maintains a collection of resources, including books, CDs and DVDs, for loan at no cost to parents and professionals; It provides professional development opportunities on ASD and assistive technology for educators, parents, and other professionals; maintains a services and supports database that is searchable online; loans assistive technology devices for purposes of assessment; and disseminates current information and research through its website and publications. OCALI is responsible for pursuing activities to address the recommendations made by the Ohio Autism Taskforce (OAT).

For more information, contact OCALI at their toll free number (866) 886-2254 or check the website: www.ocali.org

Federal Assistance Programs

****Supplemental Security Income (SSI)***

Based on parents' income, some children with disabilities are eligible to receive a cash benefit through Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Eligibility requirements are related to family income, including income from salary or wages, as well as savings and property. In other words, the amount of money or property a family has determines how much SSI a child can receive each month. Children may become eligible to receive benefits themselves when they reach the age of 18 if they cannot work.

To be eligible under the disability rules, a child must have a "marked and severe" functional limitation from a physical or mental condition. Children who are eligible for SSI benefits are also eligible for medical care under Medicaid.

Apply for SSI for your child by contacting your local Social Security Administration office or by calling the following toll free number (800) 772-1213. Have your social security number available when you call.

****Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)***

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is a program that provides for a worker who becomes disabled and who has paid into social security. Sometimes SSDI also pays for the worker's dependents. When a worker retires, becomes disabled, or dies, any dependent children will get monthly cash benefit. How much the child receives depends on the size of the benefit the worker received. There is a cap or a maximum amount one family can receive, when both the worker and dependent children get benefits.

Apply by contacting your local Social Security Administration office or by calling the following toll free number (800) 772-1213 TTY (800) 325-0778.

****Internal Revenue Service: Tax Deductions and Tax Credits for Families***

According to IRS rules, a federal tax credit is available for eligible low- and moderate-income individuals and families who work. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) reduces the amount of tax you owe. Workers with one or more eligible children could apply if their income was less than the federal guidelines. For example, in 2008, workers with one eligible child could apply if their income was less than \$33,995. To determine if you are eligible for the credit, you can complete an assessment online at: <http://www.irs.gov/Credits-&-Deductions>

***Tax Deductions for Medical Expenses**

Eligible medical expenses may be used as a tax deduction under IRS rules. The deduction can be taken only for unreimbursed medical expenses that amount to more than 7.5 percent of the adjusted gross income. To be eligible, parents must itemize deductions and not take the standard deductions.

Eligible expenses include health insurance payments, dental payments, transportation and hotel costs associated with getting medical care, and costs for assistive technology and durable medical equipment. You can combine the costs of medical care for yourself, your child with a disability, and any other family member to reach the 7.5 percent limit required.

For more information, contact the IRS at (800) 829-3676 or visit the IRS website at www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc502.html

Ohio Support and Advocacy Services

Disability Rights Ohio

The mission of the Disability Rights Ohio (DRO) is to protect and guarantee the human, civil, and legal rights of Ohioans with disabilities. DRO provides information about the rights of children and adults with disabilities through the agency's publications and advocacy resources. DRO also offers advocacy services that are free and confidential. Services range from information and referral, to mediation, negotiation, and legal advocacy.

To contact DRO, call 1-800-282-9181 or visit their website at <http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org>

Non-Profit Organizations

AT Ohio

AT Ohio, a federally funded non-profit organization housed at the Ohio State University in Columbus, is designed to help Ohioans with disabilities acquire assistive technology. Several programs are available through AT Ohio, including:

- An adaptive toy library
- An assistive technology trading post
- A computer refurbish and redistribution program
- Low-interest loans to purchase assistive technology
- Links to assistive technology websites, vendors, and information sources

To find out more, contact AT Ohio at (800) 784-3425 or check out their website at <http://www.atohio.org>

Lions Club International

Since 1917, Lions Clubs have offered people the opportunity to give something back to their communities. Lions tackle problems like blindness, drug abuse prevention, and diabetes awareness. The organization has a rich history of helping low-income individuals with disabilities, mostly with vision and hearing disorders, by providing grants for medical equipment, surgeries, glasses, hearing aids, and so on.

To find the club closest to you, visit <http://www.lionsclubs.org/EN/index.php>

You may also contact the Lions Club headquarters at (630) 571-5466.

Sertoma Club

Sertoma is an international organization dedicated to “SERvice TO MAnkind.” Every year Sertoma clubs raise more than \$20 million for local community service projects. Through these projects, as well as grants and scholarships, Sertoma clubs return those funds to their respective communities. Since 1963, Sertoma clubs have assisted more than 24 million Americans who have speech and hearing disorders through its varied programs, scholarships, grants, endowment campaigns and local events.

To find the chapter close to you visit the Sertoma website at <http://www.sertoma.org/sertoma-new-pages/find-a-club-selection>

You may also contact the Sertoma headquarters at (816) 333-8300.

Rotary International

Rotary is a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders that provides humanitarian service, encourages high ethical standards in all vocations, and helps build goodwill and peace in the world. Rotarians worldwide provide individuals with disabilities with education, employment, accessibility, and equal participation opportunities. Each club develops its individual service program from nine areas – one of which is helping people with disabilities. Several clubs have donated medical equipment and helped fund surgeries to low-income individuals with disabilities. Rotarians also work with children with disabilities in community programs like sporting events.

To find the club nearest you, contact the headquarters at (847) 866-3000 or visit <https://www.rotary.org/en/search/club-finder>

Kiwanis Club

Founded in 1915, Kiwanis International is an organization of service- and community-minded individuals who support children and young adults around the world. Service projects also address other needs within the community, such as working to stop substance abuse, helping the elderly, promoting literacy, supporting youth sports and recreation, responding to disasters, and supporting specific persons in need.

Aktion Clubs are community service groups made up of adults with mental and physical disabilities who perform service to help others. It is a sponsored organization of the Kiwanis Club. The purpose of the clubs is to provide a way for adults with disabilities to develop leadership skills, to serve their communities, to be integrated into society and to demonstrate the value and dignity of citizens living with disabilities.

Contact the Kiwanis headquarters for more information (800) 549-2647 or visit their website to find a Kiwanis Club or Aktion chapter near you: <http://www.kiwanis.org/kiwanis>.

Parent and Family Support Programs

Ohio Autism Coalition (OAC)

The OAC is comprised of representatives of the autism advocacy organizations throughout the state, providing a forum for the various autism groups to meet with each other, combine resources, and work together to further the improvement of services and supports to families dealing with ASD.

The following groups belong to this organization:

- Autism Society of Ohio
- Asperger/PDD Syndrome Parent Information Education Support (ASPIES)
- Autism Society of Greater Cleveland
- Autism Society of Greater Cincinnati
- Autism Society of Northwest Ohio
- Autistic Spectrum Kids (A.S.K.)
- Central Ohio Chapter, Autism Society of America
- Central Ohio Families for Effective Autism Treatment
- Cincinnati Families for Effective Autism Treatment
- Dayton Families for Effective Autism Treatment
- Fight Autism Now
- Autism Project of Southern Ohio
- Marietta Area Autism Group
- North Central Ohio Chapter
- Tri-County Chapter

You can find out more about the Ohio Autism Coalition at http://www.autismohio.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=165

Autism Society of Ohio

The Autism Society of Ohio is dedicated to improving the lives of all affected by autism in Ohio through family and individual support, autism awareness activities, information and referral services, an information packed website (www.autismohio.org), a weekly e-newsletter, and an information phone line. The Autism Society of Ohio advocates for individuals with autism, their families and those who work with them in Ohio by working with all of the different state agencies (ie. Ohio Departments of Health, Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, Education, etc.) to improve and increase services. The Autism Society of Ohio advocates with the Ohio General Assembly on legislation affecting individuals with autism, organizes grassroots advocacy to do the same through the Ohio Autism Advocacy Network and collaborates with other state disability organizations.

Learn more about the Autism Society of Ohio at: www.autismohio.org

You may also call their information line (614) 487-4726.

Regional and Local Autism Groups

Several regional and local autism organizations and parent support groups exist around the state. Check the Autism Society of Ohio website to find a listing of groups:
www.autismohio.org

You may also call the ASO at (614) 487-4726 to find the nearest autism group near you.

Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities

The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) is a statewide organization dedicated to advancing the educational interests of all children with disabilities. Its mission is to help educate parents to become strong, informed advocates for their children. Through state and federal funding OCECD provides information, training, and assistance to parents of children with all disabilities regarding educational issues.

OCECD employs parents of children with disabilities as central and regional office staff to provide training and one-to-one assistance to other parents. OCECD publishes a bimonthly newsletter, maintains an informational website targeted to the interests of parents of children with disabilities, provides assistance by phone, conducts parent trainings across the state, and convenes an annual statewide conference.

OCECD also provides training and technical assistance to the network of parent mentors throughout the state. Parent Mentors (see Chapter 5 for more information about parent mentors) provide support to parents on special education issues and help parents address issues of concern with school personnel.

OCECD has produced a number of training booklets and special topic publications that are available to parents at no cost. Learn more about OCECD and its services by calling toll free (800) 374-2806, or visiting their website at www.ocecd.org/.