

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Funded Through the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)

A Guide for Families

"Family support services hooked me up with so many valuable resources I never knew existed. They also connected us with other parents who had a wealth of experience and guidance."



What are Family Support Services?

Family Support Services (FSS) are an array of services and assistance, based on each family's unique needs, that are provided to families with children who have developmental disabilities. Family Support Services are based on the belief that all children belong with families where they are loved and cared for. These supports meet everyday needs and are often critical in avoiding family crises that become much more costly, both emotionally and financially.

Family support services might include:

- ❑ Information and referral
- ❑ Assistance in identifying needs
- ❑ Advocacy to obtain needed services or benefits
- ❑ Assistance locating and acquiring services like:
 - Respite and child care
 - Adaptive equipment and assistive technology
 - Educational aids and toys
 - Accessibility modifications to the family's home or car
 - Support groups
 - Parent education
 - Special diets, clothing, and personal care items
 - Home health care and other in-home assistance
- Social and recreational activities
- Transportation to medical and other important appointments
- Medical and dental expenses not covered by insurance
- Other service and supports unique to each family's needs
- ❑ Other supports that enhance the ability of families to meet the needs of their children

"Family support staff help us navigate a system of services that is often complex and confusing."

What Should Families Expect from Family Support Services?

- ◆ Care and support received from extended family, friends, neighbors, and religious and community organizations is important. Family support services build on these existing sources of support.
- ◆ Services focus on the entire family - the child with a developmental disability, parents, siblings and other involved people.
- ◆ Services are reliable and easily available, but not imposed on families.
- ◆ Families are seen as unique and best able to define their own needs. Their individual choices and preferences are respected. Family members are active in planning, designing and evaluating the services they receive.
- ◆ Families have choices about who provides support to them.

- ◆ Services change as a family's needs change. FSS providers respond to what families identify as necessary to care for their children at home.
- ◆ Services are optimally provided before families experience extraordinary stress and feel in "crisis".
- ◆ Families are given information and knowledge necessary to make choices and decisions for themselves. Families are given assistance with decision-making if they request it.
- ◆ Children's unique abilities, needs and preferences are recognized and they are encouraged to learn, grow and develop relationships.
- ◆ Families, including their children with disabilities, are supported to enjoy and participate in community life.



What Can Families Do If They Are Unhappy With Services?

Families who are not happy with an agency they have applied to, or the services provided them, are encouraged to try to work out the problem with the agency. If still unhappy, they should contact their regional DDA office.

Who's Eligible for DDA Family Support Services?

Families in Maryland who have a child under age 22 with a developmental disability who is living at home are eligible for DDA Family Support Services. Developmental disabilities include, but are not limited to: mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, and head injury.

"The family support staff has been the lifeline on this rocky road to adulthood for my daughter."

Please note that services are not an entitlement, which means they may not be available to all eligible families because of limited funding. Limited funding also means that Family Support Services typically can't meet all of a family's needs-but they help in very significant and important ways.

How Are Services Provided and How Do Families Apply?

Family Support Services are provided by local agencies with funding from the DDA. To apply for services, contact a local FSS provider directly. For a list of agencies providing Family Support Services, call a regional DDA office:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ <i>Central Maryland Region - Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford and Howard Counties.....410-902-4500</i> □ <i>Southern Maryland Region - Charles, Calvert, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties.....301-362-5100</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ <i>Eastern Shore Region - Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties.....410-334-6920</i> □ <i>Western Maryland Region - Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett and Washington Counties.....301-791-4670</i> |
| <i>Maryland Relay.....800-735-2258</i> | |