



FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

For Families of Youth Eligible for Intellectual/Developmental Disability Services

Family Support Services (FSS) are a coordinated system of on-going public and private supports, services, resources, and other assistance, which are designed to maintain and enhance the quality of life of a young person with an intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD) and his or her family. Family Support Services are designed to strengthen and promote families that provide care at home for a child or young adult. These services include Respite Care, Educational Advocacy and Assistive Technology.

Please be advised that Family Support Services are not entitled or guaranteed and the ability to provide services to your child is contingent upon the availability of New Jersey Children's System of Care (CSOC) resources.

ELIGIBILITY FOR FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

In order to be eligible for Family Support Services:

- Your child must be determined eligible for Intellectual/Developmental Disability services **through the New Jersey Children's System of Care** ("eligible for Functional services") before applying for Family Support Services, **and**
- Your child must live in the community either with a family member, a resource family, or an uncompensated caregiver, **and**
- All other benefits for which the individual may be eligible (such as SSI and private insurance) must be accessed before accessing FSS resources.

RESOURCE FAMILY ELIGIBILITY

- Please note that a resource parent (foster, adoption, and kinship) is **considered an uncompensated caregiver** under the Family Support Act, N.J.S.A. 30:6D-35.
- Resource families may apply for **FSS respite services only**. Access to other FSS services for resource families is currently under consideration.

Please contact PerformCare for more information regarding eligibility for Family Support Services.

HOW TO APPLY FOR AND REQUEST FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

The telephone application takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. Call our toll free number at **1-877-652-7624**. PerformCare is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Please note that only the parent or legal guardian can apply for Family Support Services.

PerformCare evaluates for Family Support Services based on individual need, caregiver need, current services utilized/available, and the availability of resources. We will assist you in identifying appropriate services by asking you specific questions about you and your child's current needs and abilities, income,

and medical insurance. During the phone call, if other needs are identified, you can be connected to other services, including behavioral health referrals and other community resources.

NOTIFICATION

If you are approved for an available Family Support Service, the agency providing the requested service will contact you once they have an opening in their program. You will also receive a letter from PerformCare indicating authorization of the service. If you have not heard from the identified provider by the start date of service indicated on the authorization letter, call PerformCare for assistance. PerformCare matches families to services as they become available.

The agency providing the service will call you to complete their intake process. The provider is responsible for verifying every 3 months whether the service is being used and if it is helpful. If your needs change and you wish to request a different service, call PerformCare to request the change. You will need to update your Family Support Service Application during that call.

Services are not a guarantee and are based on family need and availability of resources.

Your Family Support application is valid for one year. You will be required to re-apply over the phone annually for these services.

AVAILABLE SERVICES

RESPIRE CARE

The word *respite* means “break” or “relief.” **Respite** is intended to provide temporary relief for the primary caregiver from the demands of caring for an individual with disabilities during the times when the caregiver would normally be available to provide care. This service is intended to provide care and supervision to your child either in their own home or outside their primary residence. The service relieves family members from care on a temporary or emergency basis for short periods of time.

Respite care services are designed to offer families the opportunity for a break from caregiving responsibilities. Respite also provides a positive experience for the individual receiving care. Respite allows parents time to engage in activities that they find relaxing, entertaining, or restful while a trained respite provider cares for your child.

Respite is not a substitute for school, participation in other age appropriate activities, daycare or traditional childcare, which is needed by parents in order to go to work or school and which is provided on a daily or regular basis. Respite, on the other hand, is provided on an intermittent or short-term basis to provide you with a break from caring for your child with a disability.

- **Agency Hired Respite** – Agency Hired Respite is a service provided to families who want a respite worker who is recruited, trained, and employed by the qualified agency to provide social and recreational experiences to children in or out of their homes. Effective August 1, 2024, Agency Hired Respite was limited to 90 hours of service (billed in 15-minute increments) per 90-day authorization. Families have the flexibility to utilize the 90 hours as needed within the 90-day authorization.

- **Self-Hired Respite** – Self-Hired Respite is a service provided to families who want to recruit their respite worker of choice. The family pays the worker directly and sends the paperwork in support of reimbursement to the provider agency on a monthly basis. Effective August 1, 2024, a youth's household member may serve as a Self-Hired Respite worker for the youth. The household member cannot be the youth's immediate caregiver. An immediate caregiver includes, but is not limited to, a youth's parent (or resource parent), guardian, or other legally responsible relative. Self-Hired Respite was also limited to 90 hours of service (billed in 15-minute increments) per 90-day authorization. Families have the flexibility to utilize the 90 hours as needed within the 90-day authorization.
- **Agency After School Care** – Provided by community-based agencies, after school care programs have individual criteria including specific age and supervision needs, and are close to the child's residence. After school care is provided at an agency's site and not in the child's home. After school care programs provide social and recreational experiences rather than educational programming for children out of their homes at the end of the school day. It is the caregiver's responsibility to provide transportation. Please note: Agency After School Care is billed in 15-minute increments.
- **Agency Weekend Recreation** – Weekend Recreation provides social and recreational experiences for children outside of their homes, sometimes including a community outing component, Friday evening through Sunday. It is the caregiver's responsibility to provide transportation. Please note: Agency Weekend Recreation is billed in 15-minute increments.
- **Overnight Respite** – allows your child to stay overnight in a safe, short-term alternate living arrangement. Each youth may attend up to 14 days in a rolling 351-day period, based on availability. Services must be provided in a licensed facility with round-the-clock supervision and care. Families can utilize time as needed within a rolling 351-day period. Please note: Overnight Respite is billed on a daily frequency.

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY

Educational Advocacy is a service provided to I/DD eligible youth and their families when the youth requires in-depth help with education-related needs.

There are New Jersey State and U.S. Federal laws that ensure children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. These laws (*The New Jersey Administrative Code for Special Education* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Act*) provide parents and legal guardians with the right to participate in their child's education. Educational Advocacy services assist parents and legal guardians in understanding their rights regarding their child's special education needs.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Assistive Device means an item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of youth; assistive technology cannot be solely therapeutic. Examples of assistive technology include travel chairs, walkers, and positioning systems.

Vehicle Modifications means assessments, adaptations or alterations to an automobile or van that is the youth's primary means of transportation in order to accommodate the special needs of the youth, and that are necessary to enable the youth to integrate more fully into the community. Examples of vehicle modifications include motorized lifts and ramps.

Environmental Modifications means removable/minor structural modifications to the private residence of the youth or his/her family that are necessary to ensure the health, welfare and safety of the youth or that enable the youth to function with greater independence in the home. Examples of environmental modifications include widening of doorways, ramps and/or grab-bars, and their installation.

Equipment provided in this category is subject to a maximum limit per child, per three-year cycle.

EXCLUSIONS

The following items and services are not included as part of Family Support Services:

- Services such as Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech therapy, and tutoring
- Daycare/childcare
- Summer camp financial assistance
- Services available through other sources
- Funding for the cost of a service animal
- Monthly fees for devices
- Funding for augmentative/alternative communication devices, including tablet computers (e.g., iPads)
- Funding for any item that restrains the child, including door locks, vehicle restraints, and fences
- Funding for the purchase of a modified vehicle or a vehicle to be modified
- Reimbursement for assistive technology devices or modifications that were previously purchased

Please note: CSOC will *not* supply an assistive device, vehicle or environmental modification that can be paid by another source, e.g., Medicaid, private insurance, another State division, or the school district or Local Education Authority.

GETTING INVOLVED

If you are interested in providing feedback about Family Support Services and identifying service priorities, contact the **New Jersey State Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD)**. The Council supports Regional Family Support Planning Councils that enable caregivers to have a forum to identify systemic gaps and issues in Family Support Services statewide.

Information about the Family Support Planning Councils is available on the NJCDD website:

<http://njcdd.org/the-regional-family-support-planning-councils>.