Disability and family support resources in North Texas

Use this directory alongside the adult or child SSI handout. A diagnosis or SSI application is not a prerequisite for every service. Eligibility, service areas, openings, and waitlists differ; contact each program for a current assessment.

Start with the right portal

Social Security (federal SSI/SSDI). Apply or ask about disability benefits; child SSI requires completion through SSA. 1-800-772-1213. ssa.gov/apply/ssi

Your Texas Benefits (state benefits). Screen/apply for Medicaid or CHIP, SNAP, TANF and other support; manage documents and notices. This is separate from SSI. yourtexasbenefits.com/Learn/Home

Navigate Life Texas (families). Browse disability care, Medicaid waivers, respite, special education, parent support and transition to adulthood. navigatelifetexas.org/en

2-1-1 Texas. Search by ZIP for food, rent, utilities, transportation, child care and other local support. Dial 2-1-1 or 877-541-7905. 211texas.org

Treatment and daily living

Medicaid/CHIP and managed care. Explore coverage through Your Texas Benefits. If enrolled, ask the health plan about service coordination, therapies and personal care; STAR Kids serves eligible members through age 20, STAR+PLUS serves eligible adults. hhs.texas.gov/services/health/medicaid-chip

County behavioral health and IDD authority. Tarrant: MHMR 817-335-3022; Johnson, Parker, Hood and nearby: Pecan Valley IDD 866-948-7198. Ask about assessments, case management, service coordination, and waiver interest lists. resources.hhs.texas.gov/directories/lidda

Texas Medicaid waivers. Ask about HCS/TxHmL through your county IDD authority; CLASS/MDCP interest lists through 877-438-5658. Programs have separate criteria and may have long waits. navigatelifetexas.org/en/insurance-financial-help/texas-medicaid-waiver-programs-for-children-with-disabilities

Children's early and school services. Texas ECI serves birth to 36 months; school districts evaluate ages 3–21 under Child Find. SPEDTex helps families navigate special education. hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services | spedtex.org

Continued on pages 2–3 • Use your ZIP code for program service areas. Keep copies of applications, dates, names, and decision letters.

More ways to support treatment, housing and community life

Housing and essential needs

Texas Help for Texans. Find local affordable housing, rental and utility assistance by city or county; ask a case manager whether Section 811 disability housing may fit. tdhca.texas.gov/help-for-texans

Fort Worth Housing Solutions. Check current affordable housing and voucher waitlist openings; availability changes. fwhs.org

Housing instability or homelessness. For Tarrant County, contact the homeless services helpline at 817-996-8800. For Johnson County and other nearby areas, start with 2-1-1 and ask for local coordinated entry. mhmrtarrant.org/homeless-services | 211texas.org

Food and basic costs. Screen for SNAP, TANF (families with children), Medicaid/CHIP and WIC where appropriate; 2-1-1 locates food pantries and utility programs. yourtexasbenefits.com/Learn/Home | 211texas.org

Community, education and work

Family and peer support. Navigate Life Texas covers parent networks, respite and transition. NAMI Tarrant County offers family mental health support in the greater Fort Worth area. navigatelifetexas.org/en | nami.org/find-your-local-nami/texas/nami-tarrant-county/

Respite for caregivers. Ask a Medicaid plan, waiver coordinator or 2-1-1 about respite eligibility; Navigate Life Texas explains options for families of children with disabilities. navigatelifetexas.org/en/family-support/respite-care-for-children-with-disabilities

Intensive community mental health services. Texas HCBS-AMH may support adults with serious and persistent mental illness. The YES waiver may help eligible youth ages 3–18 with serious emotional or behavioral difficulties. Ask the local mental health authority for screening. hhs.texas.gov/hcbs-amh | hhs.texas.gov/services/mental-health-substance-use/childrens-mental-health/yes-waiver

School rights and employment. SPEDTex provides special education guidance. Texas Workforce Commission VR helps eligible adults and students with disabilities prepare for, find or keep work. spedtex.org | twc.texas.gov/programs/vocational-rehabilitation

Help with benefits decisions. Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas considers SSI/SSDI appeals and other public benefit issues for eligible households; request help promptly and still protect SSA appeal deadlines. legalaidtx.org/legal-topics/income-benefits/

Mental health crisis. For immediate emotional crisis support, call or text 988. MHMR Tarrant crisis/intake: 817-335-3022 or 800-866-2465. 988lifeline.org | mhmrtarrant.org

School support continues on page 3. Programs make their own eligibility decisions. Waiver and housing waitlists and geographic coverage change.

School support for children with disabilities

School support can be requested while a child's SSI claim is pending or even if SSI is denied. The school district makes its own education decisions; a clinical diagnosis and a testing report are useful evidence, but do not automatically establish school eligibility.

Understand the two paths

IEP under IDEA. A full and individual initial evaluation considers whether the child meets a special education disability category and needs specially designed instruction. In Texas, the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee determines eligibility and, if eligible, develops an Individualized Education Program (IEP) with goals, services, supports and how progress is measured. For autism eligibility, ask the ARD team about the Texas Autism Supplement.

Section 504. A school evaluation may identify a disability that substantially limits a major life activity and a need for aids or services for equal access. A written 504 plan can describe the supports the school will provide. A student who does not qualify for an IEP may still qualify under Section 504; ask the campus 504 coordinator for its evaluation process.

How a parent can start

Send a written request to the principal or district special education director asking for a full and individual initial evaluation. Also ask the school to consider Section 504 when appropriate. Explain your concerns across academics, communication, behavior, social skills, attendance, sensory needs and daily school functioning. Attach the testing report if you choose, and keep a dated copy of the request.

Texas response timeline. For a written initial special education evaluation request sent to the principal or special education director, the school must respond within 15 school days with written notice proposing an evaluation and an opportunity to consent, or written notice refusing it. The evaluation generally is due within 45 school days after written parental consent, subject to exceptions. Section 504 has its own evaluation procedures; ask the school for them.

Use meetings and records to make the plan useful

Discuss supports that fit the child. Examples include clear written instructions, communication supports, sensory or movement breaks, predictable transitions, behavior supports, counseling or related services where appropriate, and a plan for measuring progress. Ask who will deliver each support and how you will receive updates. Keep IEP/504 plans, evaluations, meeting notices and progress reports.

If services are not working, request an ARD meeting in writing to discuss an IEP, or ask the 504 coordinator to review a 504 plan. For a written ARD meeting request, the school must schedule and convene a meeting, or give a written reason for refusing within five school days. SPEDTex can help families understand the ARD process and procedural safeguards.

Free guidance and school resources

SPEDTex. Parent's Guide to the ARD Process, special education information, and direct help: 1-855-773-3839 or inquire@spedtex.org. spedtex.org/resources/parents-guide-ard-process

Texas Education Agency. Child Find and referral rules, autism guidance, and school support resources. tea.texas.gov/special-populations-and-support/special-education

Navigate Life Texas. Plain-language guides to IEPs, Section 504, school meetings and family support. navigatelifetexas.org/en

School eligibility, SSI eligibility and Medicaid eligibility are separate decisions. This overview is general information; use the school's notices and procedural safeguards for a child's particular case.