

## Secondary Support Options for Families in New York State

### Resources for Children and Youth with Complex Needs

This handout is for families whose child or youth did not qualify for Children and Youth Evaluation Service (C-YES) services. This handout gives other programs and services in New York State that may help.

When we say “complex needs,” we mean needs that are serious and may affect more than one part of life. This can include health, feelings and behavior, learning and development, and family or social needs.

- How to use this guide:
- Look for the section that best matches your child or youth’s needs (emotional and behavior, development, medical, social, or school).
- Use the links and phone numbers to contact programs directly.
- You can share this guide with your child’s school, care manager, doctor, or other providers so you can explore options together.

### 1. Emotional and Behavioral Health Needs

Some children and youth have feelings or behavior that are hard to manage. This can include serious emotional disturbance (SED), depression, anxiety, trauma, or behavior that puts the child or others at risk.

Examples of emotional and behavior needs include:

- Feeling very sad, angry, or worried most days
- Having panic attacks or strong anxiety that gets in the way of daily life
- Hurting themselves, wanting to die, or talking about suicide
- Hitting, fighting, or acting in unsafe ways at home, in school, or in the community
- Big changes in mood or behavior that are hard to understand

Here are some programs and services you can contact:

- **Children’s Single Point of Access (C-SPOA)** – C-SPOA is a program in your county that helps connect youth with emotional or behavioral needs to mental health services. These services can include care coordination, in-home services, and sometimes residential programs.

Resource: Learn more and find your local C-SPOA: <https://helphubforfamilies.ny.gov/next-steps/childrens-single-point-of-access-c-spoa/>

- **County Mental Health Clinics** – Many counties have mental health clinics just for children and youth. These clinics can offer counseling, therapy, medicine management, and other supports.

Resource: You can search for programs using the New York State Office of Mental Health program directory: <https://my.omh.ny.gov/bi/pd> or go to <https://omh.ny.gov> and select “Find a Mental Health Program”).

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** – You can call or text 988 any time, day or night, if your child or youth is in crisis, thinking about suicide, or having a mental health emergency.

Resource: You can also chat online at <https://988lifeline.org/>.

- **Mobile Crisis Teams** – In many counties, a crisis team can come to your home or another place in the community to help when a mental health crisis is happening.

Resource: You can often reach them by calling your county mental health department or by calling 211 (<https://www.211newyork.org/>).

## 2. Developmental Disabilities and Developmental Delays

Some children and youth need extra help to learn, communicate, move, or take care of daily tasks. This can include autism, intellectual disability, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, or other developmental delays.

Examples of developmental needs include:

- Autism or suspected autism (trouble with social skills, changes, or sensory needs)
- Intellectual disability or global developmental delay
- Cerebral palsy or trouble with walking, moving, or using hands
- Speech and language delays (hard time talking or understanding speech)
- Learning, social, or behavior challenges that affect everyday activities

Programs and services you can contact:

- **Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)** – OPWDD supports people with certain developmental disabilities. Supports can include service coordination, respite, help at home, day programs, and housing supports.

Resource: To get started, visit: <https://opwdd.ny.gov/get-started> and learn about the “Front Door” process: <https://opwdd.ny.gov/get-started/front-door>.

- **Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) Program** – This New York State Department of Health program helps families of children and youth (birth to age 21) who have serious ongoing physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional needs. Local CYSHCN programs can help families find health care, insurance, and other supports.

Resource: Learn more: [https://www.health.ny.gov/community/special\\_needs/](https://www.health.ny.gov/community/special_needs/).

- **Early Intervention Program (birth to age 3)** – This program is for babies and toddlers who are not learning, playing, or developing like other children their age. Services can include speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and special instruction.

Resource: Information for families:

[https://www.health.ny.gov/community/infants\\_children/early\\_intervention/](https://www.health.ny.gov/community/infants_children/early_intervention/).

- **Preschool Special Education (ages 3–5)** – Preschool children with disabilities may be able to get special education services through their school district.

Resource: Learn more about the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE):

<https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/preschool-special-education>.

- **Parent to Parent of New York State** – This program connects parents who are raising children with developmental disabilities or special health care needs. Parents can share ideas, information, and emotional support.

Resource: Visit: <https://www.ptopnys.org/>.

- **Families Together in New York State** – This statewide group supports families and youth with emotional, behavioral, and cross-system needs, including youth with developmental disabilities. Learn more: <https://www.ftnys.org/>.

### 3. Complex Medical or Physical Health Needs

Some children and youth have serious or long-term health conditions. They may see many doctors, need special equipment, or have many hospital visits. This can include seizure disorders, heart problems, cancer, rare genetic conditions, severe asthma, or needing a feeding tube, ventilator, or other medical devices.

Programs and services you can contact:

- **Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) Program** – Local CYSHCN programs can help families find doctors, specialists, and community supports. They may also help families understand insurance and other resources.

Resource: Learn more and find local contacts at

[https://www.health.ny.gov/community/special\\_needs/](https://www.health.ny.gov/community/special_needs/).

- **Local Department of Social Services (DSS)** – Your county DSS can help with Medicaid, Child Health Plus, SNAP (food benefits), Temporary Assistance, and other benefits that support your child’s health and basic needs.

Resource: Find your local DSS office at: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/directories/localdss.php> or view Medicaid LDSS contacts at:

[https://www.health.ny.gov/health\\_care/medicaid/ldss.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/ldss.htm).

- **Hospital or Clinic Social Work and Care Management** – Many hospitals and large clinics have social workers or care managers. They can help with care coordination, discharge planning, equipment, transportation, and community supports. Ask your child’s primary care provider or specialist how to contact a social worker or care manager.

- **211 New York** – If you are not sure where to start, 211 can help you find local programs for medical transportation, medication help, food, housing, and more.

Resource: Visit <https://www.211newyork.org/> or dial 211.

#### 4. Social Needs, Safety, and Family Support

Sometimes the main needs are about safety, money, housing, or stress in the family. This can include trouble paying for food or rent, family violence, caregiver mental health or substance use problems, or child safety concerns.

Examples of social and family stress needs include:

- Trouble paying for housing, food, heat, or electricity
- Worry about losing housing or being homeless
- Violence, threats, or feeling unsafe at home or in a relationship
- Caregiver depression, anxiety, or substance use that affects the family
- Worry that child protective services may become involved

Programs and services you can contact:

- **Local Department of Social Services (DSS)** – DSS can provide casework support, preventive services to help keep children safely at home, and financial benefits such as SNAP, Temporary Assistance, and housing-related help.

Resource: Find your county DSS office: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/directories/localdss.php>.

- **211 New York** – 211 can help you find local resources for food, housing, utilities, child care, and more.

Resource: Visit <https://www.211newyork.org/> or dial 211 to speak with a community resource specialist.

- **Domestic and Sexual Violence Services** – If you are not safe at home, help is available 24/7. You can call the New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline at 1-800-942-6906 (voice) or 711 (TTY).

Online Resource: New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence directory to find local programs: <https://www.nyscadv.org/find-help/program-directory.html>.

- **New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)** – OCFS supports programs that help families keep children safe and cared for at home when possible.

Resource: Learn more about prevention services at:

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/prevention/>.

## 5. School and Learning Supports

Many children and youth with complex needs also need help in school. This can include learning problems, ADHD, autism, physical health needs during the school day, or behavior and emotional needs at school.

Examples of school and learning needs include:

- Trouble with reading, writing, or math
- Trouble paying attention, sitting still, or staying organized
- Needing help from the school nurse or staff for health needs during the day
- Getting into fights, being sent out of class, or having big feelings at school

Programs and supports you can contact:

- **School Supports (IEP and Section 504 Plans)** – Public schools must check if a student has a disability that affects learning. If your child is eligible, the school can create an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan. These plans can provide extra help, changes to the classroom, or other supports. Families can learn more from the New York State Education Department parent resources page:

Resource: <https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/parent-resources>.

- **Preschool Special Education (ages 3–5)** – Young children may get special education supports in preschool through the CPSE process.

Resource: Learn more: <https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/preschool-special-education>.

- **Family and Youth Peer Support** – Family and youth peers are people who have lived experience raising a child with special needs or growing up with those needs themselves. They can help you get ready for school meetings, understand your rights, and share your child’s needs with the school. Families Together in New York State has information about family and youth peer support:

Resource: <https://www.ftnys.org/> and Family Peer Support: <https://www.ftnys.org/family-peer-support/>.

## 6. Finding Local Community and Non-Profit Programs

Many communities have local programs that can give extra help to children, youth, and families. These can include youth mentoring, support groups, after-school programs, recreation, and respite for caregivers.

Ways to find local programs:

- Call 211 or visit <https://www.211newyork.org> and search by your ZIP code. You can use key words like “youth mentoring,” “food pantry,” “housing,” “respite,” or “parent support group.”
- Ask your child’s school social worker, counselor, psychologist, or school nurse about local programs that support children with similar needs.
- Contact your county mental health department, local DSS, or county health department and ask if they have a resource list for families of children with special needs.

If you need help understanding any of these options, you can ask a trusted provider, school staff, or care manager to review this handout with you. It is okay to ask questions and to keep asking until you understand the choices for your child or youth.