

Information for
**Children With Special
Health Care Needs
and Their Families**



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Thank you for requesting this booklet **“NC Health Choice Information for Children With Special Health Care Needs and Their Families”**. Because we recognize that some children need services that are not covered by a typical health insurance plan, NC Health Choice has two parts:

Part I: The core plan is available for all children enrolled in NC Health Choice. The comprehensive core plan is described in the **“NC Health Choice Handbook”** that arrived by mail with your child’s ID card.

Part II: The special needs plan includes some additional benefits for children with special health care needs. This booklet describes those additional benefits and how to access them for your child.

Children with special health care needs have access to **both plans** while enrolled in NC Health Choice. There is no separate application process or enrollment fee for the special needs portion. You do not have to pick one plan over the other. **You will need to keep both the “NC Health Choice Handbook” and this “NC Health Choice Information for Children With Special Health Care Needs and Their Families” booklet handy for future reference.** This booklet will help you to understand how the core and the special needs plans work together. It is not intended to take the place of the handbook, which provides much more detail than is provided here. We suggest that you read that handbook thoroughly before reading this booklet.

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Ideas for Making Things Work



Like all families, those who have children with special health care needs want the best possible health care for their children. NC Health Choice recognizes that a family's responsibility for their children's health is a complicated one. Children with special health care needs tend to visit pediatric specialists, other health care providers and hospitals frequently. They often require specialized therapies, medication and equipment. Most need an array of community support to participate fully in the activities of childhood.

As your child's most important health care advocate, you can help shape and improve the services your child receives by being an informed and active consumer. To fully benefit from your child's enrollment in NC Health Choice, we suggest that you:

- Remember the importance of preventive care for every child! Make sure that your child gets all needed immunizations on time and sees a health care provider for regular well-child and health education visits.
- Learn all you can about your child's condition and what kinds of doctors, therapists, medicine, equipment, supplies and other services he/she might need. Try to keep all of your child's medical information in one place.
- Establish an ongoing relationship with a health care provider who can work with you and your child to identify goals and to develop a long-term health care plan.
- Become familiar with the "NC Health Choice Handbook" as well as this "NC Health Choice Information for Children With Special Health Care Needs and Their Families" booklet. Pay extra attention to the services that require prior approval. Take both books with you to appointments so that you and your child's health care providers can work as a team. Tell providers that they too can access both books online at the following website: www.ncdhhs.gov/dma/cpcont.htm.
- Remember that NC Health Choice is a health insurance program. Although it does cover more services than many typical insurance plans, it will only cover services that relate to your child reaching specific health or developmental goals. Work with your child's health care providers to make sure that requests for services, equipment and supplies meet the standard of "medical necessity".



Frequently Asked Questions



What is the difference between the core plan and the special needs plan under NC Health Choice?

Services included in the core plan of NC Health Choice are the same as those covered under the NC State Employee's Health Plan (**SEHP**). Dental, vision and hearing-related services were added to make the core plan even better. **If you have questions about the core plan, call Customer Services at 1-800-422-4658.** The core plan is administered by the SEHP and Blue Cross Blue Shield of NC which processes NC Health Choice insurance claims.

Services in the special needs plan are similar to those covered under the NC Health Check Program (Medicaid for children). This portion of the plan is administered by the Division of Public Health (**DPH**). Emergency respite care was added to make the special needs plan even better. **For questions about the special needs plan, call the Children with Special Health Care Needs Help Line at 1-800-737-3028.**

What benefits are available to all children enrolled in NC Health Choice?

Most children will be able to get all the health care services they need through the core plan. The core plan is described in the "NC Health Choice Handbook" that arrived by mail with your child's ID card. Here are just some of the benefits that NC Health Choice covers **for all enrolled children.**

- Well-Child Checkups
- Immunizations (shots)
- Sick Visits
- Vision and Hearing Care
- Lab Tests
- Therapies (Physical, Occupational and Speech)
- Dental Care
- Prescription Medication
- Hospital Care
- Medical Equipment and Supplies
- Mental Health Counseling
- Surgery
- Alcohol and Drug Treatment

Some of these services require prior approval and documentation of medical necessity by a medical provider. We suggest you make a list of the services your child needs. Check your "NC Health Choice Handbook" to see if those services are covered and if they require prior approval.



What additional benefits are available to children with special health care needs enrolled in NC Health Choice?

Children with special health care needs may qualify for additional coverage under NC Health Choice. This additional coverage is called the special needs plan. All **physical health services** under the special needs plan require prior approval and documentation of medical necessity by a medical provider. All **mental health or alcohol and drug treatment, developmental disability or emergency respite services** under the special needs plan require precertification (prior approval) by a Mental Health Case Manager for the plan. Additional services for children with special health care needs may include:

■ **Physical Health Services**

- Medical nutrition therapy
- Formulas for children fed by tube
- Aids for daily living and personal care (like bathing and eating equipment)
- Seating and positioning equipment
- Standing and walking aids
- Mobility products and accessories (like wheelchairs)
- Miscellaneous medical supplies

■ **Mental Health/Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Developmental Disability Services**

- Community Support Services
- Day Treatment
- Intensive In-Home Services
- Multisystemic Therapy
- Mobile Crisis
- Diagnostic Assessment
- Targeted Case Management
- Residential Treatment Services (Levels I-IV)

■ **Emergency Respite Services**

Under NC Health Choice, emergency respite services may be provided for unplanned situations in which family members temporarily do not have the capacity to safely care for their child or when changes in their child's health, behavior, or development require in-home or out-of-home temporary support. There is a separate benefit booklet for emergency respite care. If your child may need emergency respite services in the future, call the **Children with Special Health Care Needs Help Line at 1-800-737-3028** to request a copy of the "Emergency Respite Care" booklet.



How do I determine if my child qualifies for the special needs plan?

Most children will be able to get all the services they need under the core plan. Children who need services that are not covered by the core plan may also qualify for the special needs plan. A child with special health care needs is defined as one who has a condition or issue that meets all three of the following criteria:

- **has lasted or is expected to last twelve (12) months or more,**
- **interferes with the child's daily routine, and**
- **requires more medical care and family management than most children need.**

How do I tell NC Health Choice that my child has special health care needs and may need services that are not covered by the core plan?

Your child's doctor will be able to send information to NC Health Choice to tell us that your child qualifies for the special needs plan. The doctor must complete a **Physician Certification Form** that asks about birth defects, mental or behavioral disorders, long-term or complicated illnesses, acquired (not present at birth) illnesses or disorders, or developmental disabilities. Instructions on how to obtain a form are in the next question.

Any doctor who can certify that your child meets the special needs definition as defined above can complete the **Physician Certification Form**. The form can be submitted to NC Health Choice by fax or mail by you or the physician. The fax number and address are listed on the form.

The certification is good for 12 months and has to be submitted only once during that 12-month period. To make sure your child's certification is always up-to-date, we suggest you request a new certification form each time you re-enroll your child with NC Health Choice, and ask your physician to complete and submit it.





How can my child's doctor, therapist or I get a Physician Certification Form?

There are several ways to get a **Physician Certification Form**:

- You can call the **Children with Special Health Care Needs Help Line** at 1-800-737-3028 to request the form.
- You or your child's health care provider (even a therapist) can call to request the form or download it from the internet. Go to www.ncdhhs.gov/dma/CHIP/nchcprov.html
- Staff of NC Health Choice will mail the form to your child's doctor **if** services **not covered** by the core plan are requested and there is no form already on file.

The certification is good for 12 months and is submitted only once during that 12-month period.

How does the Physician Certification Form help my child get the services he or she needs?

All services under the special needs plan require prior approval and must be medically necessary. When prior approval staff determine that a service being requested is not covered by the core plan, the **Physician Certification Form** guarantees that the request will be reviewed a second time automatically to determine if it can be covered under the special needs plan. If a current form is not on file, the prior approval request will be held up until one is received.

See the question directly above this one to understand how you or your child's physician can get a Physician Certification Form.





How can I know if something I feel my child needs is likely to be approved and if the request will be considered “medically necessary” by NC Health Choice?

Before submitting a prior approval request, you may want to determine for yourself if the request is likely to be approved. To be approved it has to be medically necessary. The questions below may help you with that determination. Your child’s health care providers will also be able to guide you.

Ask yourself if the request is for something that is:

- A covered service under NC Health Choice (check both the core and special needs plans);
- Necessary for and appropriate to the diagnosis, treatment, cure or relief of a health condition, illness, injury, disease or its symptoms;
- Not for experimental, investigational or solely cosmetic purposes;
- Within generally accepted standards of medical care in the community (something commonly recommended for children with the same or similar condition as your child); and
- Not solely for the convenience of the child, the parents/guardians, or the provider

If you still have questions, call **Customer Services at 1-800-422-4658** or the **Children with Special Health Care Needs Help Line at 1-800-737-3028**.





What are the steps for getting prior approval for services?

Only a few services under the core plan require prior approval. Check your “NC Health Choice Handbook” for the services your child is likely to need and remind health care providers when prior approval is necessary. **However, all services under the special needs plan require prior approval and must be medically necessary.** Prior approval requests for both the core and the special needs plans are submitted to the same agencies. Those addresses, phone and fax numbers are in the back of the “**NC Health Choice Handbook.**” Only the phone numbers are listed in the last section of this booklet.

■ Medical

The prior approval staff reviews requests for **medical services, equipment or supplies.** Requests must be in writing and can be submitted by mail or fax. The request will be reviewed first under the core plan. If the request is for a service **not** covered by the core plan **but** the child has been certified as having special needs, it will be reviewed a second time automatically to determine if it can be approved under the special needs plan. If the request is approved, the provider who submitted it will be notified. If the request is denied, both the provider and the parents/guardians will be notified.

■ Mental Health

Mental Health Case Managers review requests for **mental health or alcohol and drug treatment, developmental disability or emergency respite services.** Some services can be approved by phone.

PLEASE NOTE: Precertification (prior approval) by the Mental Health Case Manager is required prior to the start of treatment. If the request is approved, both the provider and the parents/guardians will be notified. Both parties will also be notified if the request is denied.

You may be held responsible for payment of services your child receives if prior approval or precertification is not requested. This also applies to all services for which prior approval or precertification was requested, but denied by NC Health Choice.





Can my child's provider or I call to check on the status of a request that has already been submitted for prior approval?

To check the status of a request for **medical services, equipment or supplies**, call **Prior Approval at 1-800-422-1582**. If they tell you that the request has been sent to the Division of Public Health (DPH), that means it is being reviewed a second time under the special needs plan. Call the **Children with Special Health Care Needs Help Line at 1-800-737-3028** for a status update.

To check the status of a request for **mental health or alcohol and drug treatment, developmental disability or emergency respite service**, call a Mental Health Case Manager at **1-800-753-3224**. A Case Manager reviews requests under both the core and the special needs plans at that one location.

If a request for medical services, equipment or supplies is approved, the provider who submitted it will be notified. Both the provider and the parents/guardians will be notified if the request is denied.

If a request for mental health or alcohol and drug treatment, developmental disability or emergency respite service is approved, both the provider and parents/guardians will be notified. Both parties will also be notified if the request is denied.

Are copays required for services under NC Health Choice?

Some children enrolled in NC Health Choice have office/outpatient visit, emergency room and prescription drug copays. This means that you have to pay the first few dollars of a charge when you take your child to a doctor or therapist, to the hospital for outpatient care, to the emergency room, or when you buy a prescription drug. You can find your copay requirements on your child's NC Health Choice ID card. If you have questions about your copay requirements, call **Customer Services at 1-800-422-4658** or the **Children with Special Health Care Needs Help Line at 1-800-737-3028**.







Will NC Health Choice cover services given to my child in alternate settings?

Some services that are covered by NC Health Choice may be provided in settings outside a provider's office such as your home or at your child's school. Examples include home health care, therapies, caregiver education, case management and other developmental disability services. Services provided in alternate settings **always** require prior approval.

Will NC Health Choice cover special education and related services given to my child in school?

Schools are responsible for providing the services and support your child needs to participate in his or her education. Occasionally, a provider will recommend a type or level of service or support beyond that being provided by the school system. If you feel that your child needs services in addition to those included in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), talk with your child's IEP team and health care providers about your options. Prior approval requests submitted to NC Health Choice must document why services beyond those provided by the school system are needed.





What to Do When Things Go Wrong



What can I do if a prior approval request is denied and I disagree with that decision?

If a request for **medical services, equipment or supplies** is denied, you may not be at the end of the process. Many denials are due to lack of complete information. Work with your child's health care provider to understand the specific reason for the denial, as explained in the decision letter you and the provider received. Decide if additional information can be submitted for reconsideration. Submitting additional information may be all that is necessary for a denial to be reversed. If you would like to talk with someone about a denial of **medical services, equipment or supplies**, call **Customer Services at 1-800-422-4658**.

If the request is denied a second time, you also have the right to formally appeal the decision. All requests for appeals must be done in writing **within 60 days** of the date of the decision letter you received. The appeals process has several steps, plus there are several important agency addresses and numbers you will need to know. Check your "NC Health Choice Handbook" to learn more about filing an appeal and who can help you in this process.

If a request for **mental health or alcohol and drug treatment, developmental disability or emergency respite service** is denied, the process is a little different. There is no process for submitting additional information for reconsideration, but you can file an appeal. To talk with someone about a denial of mental health or alcohol and drug treatment, developmental disability or emergency respite service, call a **Mental Health Case Manager at 1-800-753-3224** to get the appeals process started.

What should I do if my child needs this service right away and we cannot wait until the appeals process is completed?

If a prior approval request or claim has been denied for a service that has already begun or that needs to begin immediately, you can request an **expedited** (faster) **review for some services**. This can be done at any point in the appeals process, if a delay would risk your child's life, health, or ability to regain function. Check your "NC Health Choice Handbook" to learn more about filing an appeal, requesting an expedited review, and who can help you in this process.



To request an expedited review for **medical services, equipment or supplies**, call **Customer Services at 1-800-422-4658** to get the process started. You will then be asked to describe (in writing) what you are appealing and why an expedited review is needed. You will be notified of the decision within four business days after they receive all the necessary information.

To request an expedited review for a **mental health or alcohol and drug treatment, developmental disability or emergency respite service**, call a **Mental Health Case Manager at 1-800-753-3224** to get the process started. You will be asked to describe (in writing) what you are appealing and why an expedited review is needed. You will be notified of the decision within four calendar days after the Mental Health Case Manager receives all the necessary information. **PLEASE NOTE: The Case Manager will not provide an expedited review for services that have already been provided.**



Important Telephone Numbers and Other Resources



Important phone and fax numbers as well as addresses are listed in the back of your “NC Health Choice Handbook”. Some of those phone numbers are listed here for your convenience.

■ Customer Services

1-800-422-4658 (tel)
1-919 765 7080 (fax)

■ Prior Approval Services

1-800-422-1582 (tel)
1-919 765 4890 (fax)

■ Mental Health Case Managers

1-800-753-3224 (tel)
1-919-379-9035 (fax)

■ Children with Special Health Care Needs Help Line

1-800-737-3028

En español llame al **1-800-367-2229**. Pregunte por la **Línea de Ayuda para Niños con Necesidades de Salud Especiales**.

The NC Health Choice staff would like to know if you are satisfied with the health care services your child receives. Information collected through the Children with Special Health Care Needs Help Line is important to our efforts to improve services throughout NC for children with special health care needs. You may contact us by phone at the Children with Special Health Care Needs Help Line, 1-800-737-3028, or by mail at:

NC Health Choice - Special Health Care Needs Program Manager

Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Public Health
Women’s and Children’s Health Section
1928 Mail Service Center
Raleigh NC 27699-1928



Additional Resources

Families of children with special health care needs may also be eligible for other services or supports. For more information, contact:

- The NC Family Support Network for information, referral and parent-to-parent support, at 1-800-852-0042 (children of all ages)
- The Exceptional Children's Assistance Center for information, referral, parent support and individual assistance at 1-800-962-6817 (children of all ages)
- Your child's school or your local school system for information on special education services. Also the NC Department of Public Instruction's Division of Exceptional Children (ages three years through high school). You can reach that division by calling the CARELINE at 1-800-662-7030 or by calling them directly at 1-919-807-3969.
- The NC Department of Insurance for information on your child's rights when they move from one insurance policy to another at 1-800-546-5664 (children of all ages)
- The Disability Hotline for information on applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) at 1-800-772-1213 (children of all ages)



Notes



Notes





State of North Carolina | Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Public Health | Women's and Children's Health Branch

En español llame al **1-800-367-2229**.

Pregunte por la Línea de Ayuda para Niños con Necesidades de Salud Especiales.

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