

HOW TO OBTAIN A MEDICAL ASSISTANCE (ACCESS) COVERAGE FOR YOUR CHILD

In Pennsylvania, many children with autism and other disabilities are able to qualify for Medical Assistance (also known as ACCESS). This is the primary means by which many families access the services their children need, including medically necessary speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and behavioral health services. Children between the ages of birth and 20 can qualify for this program regardless of parental income and there are no premiums, co-pays or deductibles.

STEP ONE: Contact your County Assistance Office to obtain an application [hyperlink “County Assistance Office” to <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/ServicesPrograms/CashAsstEmployment/003670281.htm>] **OR** you can apply online using the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Application for Social Services (COMPASS) [hyperlink “COMPASS” to <https://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/compass/CMHOM.aspx>]

STEP TWO: Apply for Social Security’s Supplemental Security Income (SSI) [link to SSI website at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/index.htm>]. You can find your local Social Security Office here [hyperlink to <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp>] or by dialing toll-free to (800) 772-1213. Before a child can be approved for Medical Assistance, you must prove that you applied for SSI. “Proof” may take the form of either an acceptance notice or a rejection letter. If applying in person at your local Social Security Administration office, be sure to have:

- Your child’s Social Security card
- An original birth certificate
- Evidence of your child’s diagnosis from a qualified physician (including a medical doctor or a psychologist licensed to practice in Pennsylvania)
- Information regarding your family’s assets

The Social Security staff person will request information regarding your family’s assets. If your child is eligible for SSI benefits, he or she automatically qualifies for Medical Assistance. If your assets exceed the SSI program’s limits, you may be rejected immediately. Ask the staff person to issue a rejection letter while you wait or, if this is not possible, ask them to mail it to you. **You will need the original rejection letter in order to be approved for Medical Assistance.**

NOTE: Your child’s eligibility is not conditioned upon his or her qualification for SSI benefits. Again, proof that you applied for SSI benefits is required before an application for Medical Assistance can be approved.

STEP THREE: Complete the Medical Assistance application (Form PA 600) in its entirety as though your child is completing the application. You can download the form here [hyperlink to attached “Apply for Benefits” PDF file]. While parental income is not a condition for your child’s enrollment in the Medical Assistance program, state law requires that this information is collected as part of the process. If you have questions regarding the application form, contact your County Assistance Office for assistance [hyperlink “County Assistance Office” to <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/ServicesPrograms/CashAsstEmployment/003670281.htm>].

STEP FOUR: Write “MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR DISABLED CHILD” at the top of your application to help expedite the process and deliver the completed form to your local County Assistance Office [hyperlink “County Assistance Office” to <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/ServicesPrograms/CashAsstEmployment/003670281.htm>]. You will also need:

- Your child’s Social Security card
- Your child’s original birth certificate
- Written documentation of your child’s diagnosis
- A recent paystub or most recent IRS Form 1040 if you are self-employed
- Your driver’s license
- Evidence of your Pennsylvania residency (e.g., a bill showing your name and Pennsylvania mailing address).

The Pennsylvania Medical Assistance program uses the same disability criteria SSI uses to qualify a child, but disregards parental assets in determining eligibility. **BE SURE TO REQUEST A TEMPORARY CARD OR, AT MINIMUM, YOUR CHILD’S MEDICAL ASSISTANCE NUMBER IN ORDER TO BEGIN ACCESSING SERVICES IMMEDIATELY.** Your child’s permanent card should arrive within a few months.

STEP FIVE: Enroll in a HealthChoices health plan. You can enroll here [hyperlink “here” to http://www.enrollnow.net/PASelfService/en_US/inside.html] or by phone by calling (800) 440-3989. **Not all health professionals accept all Medical Assistance plans, so you may want to confirm which plans your current healthcare professionals accept before selecting a plan.** More information on Medical Assistance and HealthChoices is located here. [hyperlink “here” to <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/ServicesPrograms/MedicalAssistance/>]