



Growing with Support

Developmental Disability Resources for Every Age and Stage



Our Mission

Our mission is to SPARK - Supporting People with developmental disabilities through Advocacy, Resources, and Kindness. At the Johnson County Board of Services, we support individuals with **developmental disabilities** and their families through every stage of life. From early childhood to adulthood, we connect people to vital services, fund essential supports, and advocate for a more inclusive community.

The purpose of this booklet is to help guide you through the different life stages and link you to the resources you need.

Call us for more info



660-240-3343

Our Values



Families First

We will always place families first, through kindness and accountability. We empathize and hold ourselves accountable to acquire and assure the continuity of services and supports for those we serve.



Communication

We value clear and intentional communication in order to create a positive rapport with those we serve and each other. We understand there are a variety of communication styles and adapt as necessary.



Advocacy

We advocate for those we serve to live their good life, while encouraging our community to be more inclusive. We give families and individuals the tools to advocate for themselves.



Early Childhood (0-3 Years)

A developmental disability is a condition that begins early in life and affects how a person learns, moves, or functions. To receive services through the Department of Mental Health, the disability must be diagnosed before age 21, start before age 22, and seriously impact at least two areas like self-care, communication, or learning.

Focus Areas

During early childhood, the focus is on early identification and intervention.

This may include **developmental screenings, therapy services like speech, occupational, and physical therapy, and exploring eligibility for supports.** It's also a time to establish **consistent medical care** if needed and start to create a **future long term care plan** in case something happens and parents/guardians can **no longer** care for their loved one.

Planning Priorities

Step 1: Obtain an Official Diagnosis - This is often the first step in accessing services and supports. Contact your primary care physician for assistance.

Step 2: Apply for MO HealthNet (Missouri Medicaid), if eligible - Medicaid can cover therapies, equipment, and ongoing medical needs. If not eligible for Medicaid, review private insurance coverage to understand what therapies and services your plan will cover.

Step 3: Contact Missouri First Steps - Early intervention services are available for children birth to age 3.

Step 4: Connect with the Johnson County Board of Services - We can help guide you through next steps and provide support as your child grows.

Step 5: Enroll in Parents as Teachers - A free program offering developmental screenings and in-home support for families.

Local Resources



MO HealthNet

Apply for MO HealthNet using the online application:
<https://mydss.mo.gov/healthcare/apply>



Missouri First Steps

Complete the online referral:
<https://www.mofirststeps.com/>



Johnson County Board of Services

Use our online form to inquire about services:
<https://jcmbss.com/family-navigation/>



Parents As Teachers

Contact your local school district to see if this a service provided in your area



The Pediatric Place

The Pediatric Place offers many different services. We recommend connecting with them early on, if early intervention is recommended
<https://thepediatricplacellc.com/>



Preschool to 2nd Grade

A developmental disability is a condition that begins early in life and affects how a person learns, moves, or functions. To receive services through the Department of Mental Health, the disability must be diagnosed before age 21, start before age 22, and seriously impact at least two areas like self-care, communication, or learning.

Planning Priorities

Step 1: Transition from MO First Steps to Johnson County Board of Services case management - If you aren't already involved with us, our info is listed below.

Step 2: Obtain Official Diagnosis - If you believe your child has a developmental disability, obtain an official diagnosis. Once diagnosis is received, notify your local school district for guidance.

Step 3: Build Communication with Your School Team - Stay involved in meetings and check-ins to track progress and adjust supports as needed.

Step 4: Connect with Outside Educational Resources - There are several programs in Johnson County that can assist in your child's academic goals.

Step 4: Find Online or In Person Support Groups - You and your child are not alone. Your biggest resource can be other families.

Step 5: Create a long term care plan - It's important to meet with a lawyer to start discussing the creation of a will. Who will take care of your child if you are no longer able to? Start discussing Special Needs Trusts. Large amounts of money can effect state benefits your child may need in the future.

Focus Areas

Children at this stage may receive support at school, while continuing private therapies to support their development. Behavioral strategies, interventions, and sensory tools— can help children stay regulated and fully engage in learning and daily routines.

Local Resources



MPACT Training

Offers monthly virtual trainings and events regarding the IEP process.
<https://www.missouriparentsact.org/>



Johnson County Board of Services

Use our online form to inquire about services:
<https://jcmb.com/family-navigation/>



The Dyslexia Den

Offers comprehensive evaluation and treatment services. <https://www.thedyslexiaden.org/>



Needham & Foster

Dyslexia & Speech Diagnostic Treatment and Consultation Services
<https://sites.google.com/dyslexiaandspeechtherapy.com/needhamandfosterspeechtherapy/home>



The Pediatric Place

The Pediatric Place offers many different services. We recommend connecting with them early on, if early intervention is recommended
<https://thepediatricplacellc.com/>



Financial Resources

When creating long term care plans, its important to research Special Needs Trusts and MO ABLE accounts.
<https://moable.com/>
<https://www.midwestspecialneedstrust.org/>



3rd through 5th Grade

A developmental disability is a condition that begins early in life and affects how a person learns, moves, or functions. To receive services through the Department of Mental Health, the disability must be diagnosed before age 21, start before age 22, and seriously impact at least two areas like self-care, communication, or learning.

Planning Priorities

Step 1: Introduce Self Advocacy Skills - Begin helping your child recognize their strengths, challenges, and how to ask for help.

Step 3: Incorporate Assistive Technology - Explore tools that support learning, communication, and organization.

Step 4: Support Social Skill Development - Talk with the school about strategies or services to help build peer relationships.

Step 4: Encourage Participation in Extracurriculars - Look for inclusive clubs, sports, or community programs that support confidence and social connection. Johnson County has various programs like Special Olympics Bowling, Basketball, and a softball program.

Step 5: Begin Light Future Planning - Start thinking about long-term goals and how to build skills that will support your child's future independence.

Focus Areas

In this stage, the focus is on strengthening academics, social skills, and independence. Children may begin using different strategies for reading, writing, or communication. It's also a key time to support peer relationships, emotional regulation, and self-advocacy. Encouraging participation in inclusive activities can help build confidence and a sense of belonging.

Local Resources



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<https://www.missouriparentsact.org/>



MO Assistive Technology

Offers assistive technology services and programs for at home, work, school, or play.

<https://at.mo.gov/>



Missouri Department of Special Education

Information to help guide parents with understanding State and Federal regulations.

<https://dese.mo.gov/special-education/compliance/parent-information>



JCBS Email Blasts

Sign up to receive email blasts with upcoming events like Bright Sox, Special Olympics, and educational events.

<https://jcbs.com/newsletters/>



Tools for Everyone

A training on universal strategies to improve the quality of life for all people.

<https://dmh.mo.gov/media/pdf/tools-everyone>





6th through 8th Grade

A developmental disability is a condition that begins early in life and affects how a person learns, moves, or functions. To receive services through the Department of Mental Health, the disability must be diagnosed before age 21, start before age 22, and seriously impact at least two areas like self-care, communication, or learning.

Planning Priorities

Step 1: Begin Formal Transition Planning - Work with the school to set post-secondary goals related to education, employment, and independent living.

Step 2: Explore Career Interests and Strengths - Use interest surveys or classroom activities to spark discussions about the future.

Step 3: Promote Self-Advocacy - Help students learn to speak up for their needs in school, at home, and in their community.

Step 4: Start Learning About Guardianship and Alternatives - Legal guardianship costs thousands of dollars. It's important to start saving now in case your child needs it after they turn 18. There are other options like supported decision making, which does not legally remove a person's rights.

Step 5: Future Planning - Begin looking at colleges and after high school programs like technical colleges. There are several colleges throughout Missouri that provide post secondary education to individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Focus Areas

Middle school is a key time for building independence, confidence, and future readiness. Students may begin formal transition planning through, explore career interests, and strengthen life skills like organization, communication, and self-advocacy. Social connections, emotional health, and daily living skills become even more important as they prepare for high school and beyond.

Local Resources



MPACT Training

Offers monthly virtual trainings and events regarding the IEP process.
<https://www.missouriparentsact.org/>



Charting the LifeCourse

Charting the LifeCourse is a powerful framework that helps individuals with disabilities and their families plan for a meaningful life.

Contact with JCBS if you're interested in learning more about the framework and tools!



MODD Council

Partners in Policymaking is a leadership training program for adults with disabilities and parents of children with developmental disabilities.

<https://moddcouncil.org/>



Missouri Protection & Advocacy Services

Learn more about guardianship and other supportive decision making options.

<https://www.moadvocacy.org/resources/guardianship>



Post Secondary Programs

Thrive - University of Central Missouri

Bear Power - Missouri State

UMSL Succeed - University of Missouri - St. Louis





9th through 12th Grade

A developmental disability is a condition that begins early in life and affects how a person learns, moves, or functions. To receive services through the Department of Mental Health, the disability must be diagnosed before age 21, start before age 22, and seriously impact at least two areas like self-care, communication, or learning.

Planning Priorities

Step 1: Update the Transition Plan – Focus on post-secondary goals related to employment, education, and independent living.

Step 2: Connect with Employment Services – Students can access Pre-ETS through the University of Missouri. The Summer Work program becomes available the summer after junior year and offers programs to build real-world job skills. Contact your local school district for more information.

Step 3: Explore Post-Secondary Options – Consider college, trade schools, supported employment, or day programs based on interests and needs.

Step 4: Apply for Adult Services – If not already involved, contact the Johnson County Board of Services. JCBS can assist with getting a Medicaid application submitted 90 days before your child turns 18, as we are contracted with the Missouri Department of Mental Health to help with this process.

Step 5: Discuss Guardianship or Supported Decision-Making – Make a plan that balances protection and independence.

Step 6: Plan for Life After Graduation – JCBS can help build a person - centered plan help discuss life after graduation.

Focus Areas

High school is a key time for transition planning. IEP goals should focus on employment skills, daily living, and educational plans. Students may explore supported employment, volunteer work, or college options. It's also important to strengthen self-advocacy, continue building independence, and connect with adult service agencies.

Local Resources



MPACT Training

Offers monthly virtual trainings and events regarding the IEP process.

<https://www.missouriparentsact.org/>



Missouri Pre-Employment Transition Services

Pre-ETS specialists offer no-cost pre-employment transition services to Missouri high school students with disabilities, ages 14-21. For more information follow the link or contact your local school district.

<https://pre-ets.missouri.edu/>



Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Offers a summer work program to high school students the summer after their junior year.

Contact your local school district to get started!



Missouri Protection & Advocacy Services

Learn more about guardianship and other supportive decision making options.

<https://www.moadvocacy.org/resources/guardianship>



Community Resource Specialist - JCBS

Contact our CRS to discuss state benefits, our intake process, and future services.

Phone - 660-240-3343





Transition to Adulthood

A developmental disability is a condition that begins early in life and affects how a person learns, moves, or functions. To receive services through the Department of Mental Health, the disability must be diagnosed before age 21, start before age 22, and seriously impact at least two areas like self-care, communication, or learning.

Planning Priorities

Step 1: Establish an Official Graduation or Exit Date - Adult services cannot begin until the student has officially exited high school. Programs like Day Programs through the Department of Mental Health cannot be accessed while a student is still enrolled. Setting this date is essential for smooth transitions.

Step 2: Secure Guardianship (if needed) - If guardianship has not yet been obtained and your child will need legal support in adulthood, this should be finalized before turning 18. Without it, you may not be able to legally make decisions or access information on their behalf. See guardianship document.

Step 3: Apply for Adult Services - If not already involved, connect with the Johnson County Board of Services. JCBS can assist with navigating adult services, including Medicaid and DMH applications.

Step 4: Ensure Medicaid Coverage is Active - Services through the Department of Mental Health require active Medicaid. If your child is not currently enrolled or needs to reapply, do so at least 90 days before their 18th birthday to avoid gaps in services.

Step 5: Apply for Social Security (if needed) - If your child may qualify for SSI, begin this process early. Social Security benefits can support eligibility for other services and provide financial assistance into adulthood.

Step 6: Coordinate with Targeted Case Managers through JCBS - Early communication with your Targeted Case Manager helps ensure all needed supports are identified and in place before graduation. While gaps in services may still occur due to state processing timelines or delays in Medicaid approval, our goal is to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Focus Areas

As students reach their final year of high school—whether it's their senior year or by the age 21—it's critical to establish an **official graduation or exit date**. This date determines when adult services can begin. Programs like Day Programs through the Department of Mental Health cannot be accessed until a student has officially exited school. If a student is still enrolled, they are not eligible to attend. Setting this date early allows for smoother planning and helps prevent gaps in services after graduation.

Local Resources



Community Resource Specialist

Contact our CRS to discuss state benefits, our intake process, and future services.

Phone: 660-240-3343

<https://jcmb.com/family-navigation/>



Apply for Medicaid

If you choose to apply on your own, you may do it online. **Please note that if you claim your adult child as a dependent on your taxes, your income information will need to be listed. This may effect the ability for your child to be approved for Medicaid.**

<https://mydss.mo.gov/healthcare/apply>



Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Offers employment and education assistance to adults. This program is the first step to employment help and we recommend applying for the program as soon as your child leaves high school (if your child should need it).

<https://dese.mo.gov/adult-learning-rehabilitation-services/vocational-rehabilitation>



Financial Resources

When creating long term care plans, it's important to research Special Needs Trusts and MO ABLE accounts.

<https://moable.com/>

<https://www.midwestspecialneedstrust.org/>



Social Security Administration

Apply for Social Security Disability. This can be done in person or via phone.

Phone: 800-772-1213

<https://www.ssa.gov/>



Guardianship vs. Supported Decision Making

Guardianship

Full Guardianship - If you are under full guardianship, your guardian will make all of your personal and financial decisions. Full Guardianship creates a substitute decision-maker who makes decisions for you, which may include and is not limited to the following:

- **Where to Live**
- **Whether or Not to Marry**
- **Whether or Not to Work**
- **How to Spend Income**
- **Who to Associate With**
- **Whether or Not to Seek Medical Care**
- **Whether or Not to Vote**
- **Whether or Not to Enter Into a Contract**

Limited Guardianship - Limited guardianship is a legal arrangement in which a guardian is appointed to make specific decisions for an individual, rather than having full authority over all areas of their life. This type of guardianship is designed to protect the individual's rights and independence while providing support in areas where they may need help, such as medical decisions, finances, or education. The court outlines exactly what the guardian can and cannot do, ensuring that the individual retains as much autonomy as possible.

Alternatives to Guardianship

Supported decision-making is a way for individuals with disabilities to make their own choices with help from trusted people in their lives. Rather than taking away someone's rights, it empowers them to stay in control while getting support to understand options, weigh pros and cons, and communicate their decisions. This approach values the person's voice and promotes independence, inclusion, and self-determination. Supported decision-making can include the following:

Power of Attorney (POA)
Representative Payee
Joint Bank Accounts
Healthcare POA
Trusts
Conservatorship

It's important to take the time to figure out what support works best for your child—because their voice matters. Ask them what they want, what they're comfortable with, and involve them in the conversation every step of the way.

Disclaimer: We do not provide legal advice. The information we share is general and meant for educational purposes only. Families should consult with a qualified attorney when making legal decisions, including those related to guardianship or decision-making supports.