

Choosing care for a child with special needs

What are Special Needs?

A special need is defined as any type of need that a child may have that is beyond the range of needs provided for in a typical child care setting. These needs can be temporary or permanent.

Children's needs are determined by special education programs which are federally mandated to serve children from birth to age 21 and/or by specified disabilities such as:

1. Visual
2. Physical
3. Hearing
4. Language
5. Social/Emotional
6. Learning
7. Mental Impairment
8. Medical Issues

Is a Special License Required to Care for a Child with Special Needs?

There are no special licensing requirements to care for children with special needs, although the individual needs may require the child to have certain support services. A quality child care program should make the necessary changes and provide the resources needed to meet the needs of each individual child.



What are my child's rights?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) states that child care programs cannot discriminate against individuals because of a disability.

It applies to all:

- Family child care homes
- Child care centers, including programs renting space in a religious facility.
- Public nursery/preschools

Only programs operated by a religious organization are exempt.

The ADA states that child care programs cannot:

- Charge a higher rate for a child with special needs, but may charge for “extra services” provided to a child with special needs that are not within the range of care provided by that program.
- Deny admission to a child with special needs because of an increase in the program’s insurance rates or cancellation of coverage.
- Deny services to a child with special needs even if a program for children with the same disabilities is available in the community.
- Exclude a child due to lack of staff training if training is readily available at a reasonable cost.

The ADA does permit child care programs to deny services to a child with special needs if:

- Necessary changes are too costly or difficult given the resources available to the individual program.
- There is a direct threat to the health and safety of others and this threat cannot be reduced or eliminated by reasonable modifications.
- The child’s needs are fundamentally different from what is offered by the program.

Finding a Program...

- All programs should meet the individual needs of each child. This can be done by assessing your child's needs and helping the provider adapt the curriculum to accommodate your child.
- The program's activities should be developed with the child's needs in mind. They should include activities that help the child develop physically, socially, and emotionally.
- After choosing a program, discuss with the provider the resources your child may need and what support services are available.
- Educate the provider about your child's personality, culture, family beliefs, and medical needs. If you have written materials about your child's need, you may want to give them to your provider to read.
- If possible, visit the program a couple of times before starting. Talk to your child and to the other children about what to expect once your child begins the new program.



Special Needs Resources Available...

Child & Family Connections Early Intervention

(birth to age 3)

Logan, Mason, Menard, Sangamon

Springfield, IL
(217) 793-3990

Christian, Macoupin, Montgomery

Effingham, IL
(217) 347-5601

Morgan and Scott

Quincy, IL
(217) 222-9592

More Special Needs Resources Available

Autism Project

(618) 398-7500

The Children's Center

Springfield, IL
(217) 757-7700

Children's Miracle Clinic

Springfield, IL
(217) 544-6464 ext. 30430

Computer Banc

Springfield, IL
(217) 528-9506

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

(800) 824-5064

Disability Research Network

Springfield, IL
(217) 544-0464

**Division of Specialized Care
For Children**

Springfield, IL
(217) 524-2000

Downs Syndrome Hotline

(800) 221-4602

**Epilepsy Resource Center for
Central Illinois**

Springfield, IL
(217) 726-1839

Family Matters

Effingham, IL
(866) 436-7842

**Family Resource Center for
Disabilities**

Chicago, IL
(800) 952-4199

**Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis
Network**

(800) 929-4040

Hearing and Vision Connections

Illinois School of the Deaf
& Visually Impaired
Jacksonville, IL
(217) 479-4400

WIC and Early Intervention Services

(800) 323-4769

**Illinois Early Childhood
Intervention Clearinghouse**

Statewide
(800) 852-4302

Illinois School for the Deaf

Jacksonville, IL
(217) 479-4200

Illinois STARnet

(800) 227-7537

Locus St. Resource Center

Carlinville, IL
(217) 854-3166

**March of Dimes Birth Defects
Foundation**

Springfield, IL
(217) 787-5154

Mid-Illinois Talking Book Center

Quincy, IL
(800) 426-0709

Sparc

Springfield, IL
(217) 793-2100

**Springfield Center for
Independent Living**

(800) 447-4221