



## First 5 Things To Do!

1. Get the Diagnosis Letter (a.k.a. The GOLDEN TICKET)

**Until a service provider sees the letter with the words: Diagnosis of Autism, Autism Spectrum Disorder, PPD-NOS or Asperger's Syndrome, they will not/cannot start services.** So do your child a favor and get pushy. You do not need the full evaluation report, just a paragraph on the practitioner's letterhead that states they evaluated your child and they meet all the criteria for a diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum. Tell them you need the letter ASAP. .

2. Contact Early Intervention/Birth to Three Program in your area. To find out your State's "eligibility age" and the local office of early intervention/Birth to Three Program in your area, contact your pediatrician or visit <http://www.nichcy.org/Pages/StateSpecificInfo.aspx>

**If your child is already receiving services through EI or Birth to Three, Call your Coordinator.** This diagnosis opens the doors to even more services!

3. Contact your local school district if your child exceeds the Early Intervention/Birth to Three age requirement. If your child already has an IEP: Immediately schedule a team meeting to determine what changes to your child's program need to be made. It is best to put the request in writing and deliver to your team's liaison (or any member of the team) as soon as possible.

If your child DOES NOT have an IEP (Individualized Education Program), call the special education department of your school district and do the following:

- Inform them of your child's diagnosis and request an evaluation. Usually this needs to be followed-up in writing by you and submitted to the Special Education Director.
- The School District is required to send you a consent form within 5 school days of your request.
- When you receive the consent form, review it, call the school with any questions, sign it and return it ASAP.
- The School is required to perform the evaluation and review the information with you to determine services in a meeting (usually known as a team meeting or IEP meeting) within 45 schools of the receipt of the signed consent letter.

**HUGE TIP:** Buy Nolo's : Your GUIDE to the IEP. An excellent resource! We are not going to sugar-coat it. The IEP process is very overwhelming. Whether you are going through it for the first time or the 10<sup>th</sup> time it is a very time consuming and emotional process. We suggest that

you search out “Basic Right” seminars. In Massachusetts they are provided FREE of charge by the Federation for Children with Special Needs.

#### 4. Find Local Support!

- Autism Resource and Support Centers are starting to pop up around the nation. Resource Centers offer workshops for parents, kids and siblings. They can give you detailed information about services offered in your area, county and state. Most important, through their programs you will have the opportunity to meet other local families and will offer you the support you need! To find a resource center in your area, do a GOODSEARCH or contact your local Early Intervention/Birth to Three Program or School District! By registering with the center you will be eligible to attend workshops and other social opportunities.
  - Join a YAHOO GROUP or two: Go to [www.yahogroups.com](http://www.yahogroups.com). In the search engine, type “Autism”. Wait until you see the list of groups dedicated to our children and families! You are going to want to narrow your search to your particular location (state or area of a state) or interest ( girls with Autism, biomedical treatments, new to diagnosis, etc.) This will put you in direct contact with families in your situation and using the same treatment plans you are using! It is other parents and caregivers that will give you the most support and provide you with the best information!
5. GET IN THE KNOW!! Take the time to research ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) and Biomedical therapies as treatment protocols. Visit our website for a listing of current links at [www.HugePossibilitiesInc.org/Familiesnewtodiagnosis](http://www.HugePossibilitiesInc.org/Familiesnewtodiagnosis)

***The Ready-Set-Focus Checklist scheduled for publication in Fall 2009 will be more specific, interactive and encompass more. But these are the first steps.***

***The Ready-Set-Focus Checklist is a constant work in progress. We want to hear from you! All suggestion are reviewed for inclusion on our checklist. Make a suggestion and make a difference in the life of a Family new to the diagnosis of Autism!***

Remember to use GoodSearch and GoodShop with Huge Possibilities, Inc as your designated charity for ALL your internet searches and shopping! The more money we raise, the more services and products we can offer at FREE or reduced prices! Visit [www.GoodSearch.com](http://www.GoodSearch.com) for more information!