



**Massachusetts Department of Public Health**  
**CHILDREN & YOUTH**  
**WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS PROGRAM**



1-800-882-1435 (if calling from within Massachusetts) *or* 617-624-6060  
617-624-5992 (TTY)

The **Children & Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) Program** at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health works with families, providers, and others to support children and youth with special health needs ages birth to 22 and their families.

We help families get the resources they need. Resources include public benefits, community-based programs, newborn screening services, support from other parents, family and professional workshops, care coordination, and funding. We help families coordinate their child's medical, social and educational needs. We work closely with other DPH programs such as Early Intervention.

**Our programs include:**

**Community Support Line:** This toll-free statewide Community Support Line offers information, technical assistance and referral for families with children and youth with special health care needs. Resource Specialists are available to assist families & providers Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm.

**Care Coordination Program for Children with Special Health Care Needs:** Care Coordinators can help eligible families to get care and services, and provide consultation to parents, educators and medical and social service providers with a focus on children and youth with complex medical conditions. Services include assessment, coordination, education and referral. Staff are located in selected pediatric primary care settings and in all DPH regional offices.

**Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund (CICRF):** The CICRF provides financial assistance to MA families who have large expenses due to a child's illness, accident or disability. It is a "safety net" for families when expenses are not covered by insurance or any other financial source. CICRF is a reimbursement program that pays families money after they have spent it. Eligibility is based on amount of expenses in relation to family income. Expenses must occur before a child's 22nd birthday.

**Family Initiatives:** The Office of Family Initiatives provides opportunities for family members whose children have special health care needs to participate in the development and implementation of policies, programs and evaluation, and ensures a family-centered focus to all DPH Division for Perinatal, Early Childhood and Special Health Needs programs. Initiatives include Family TIES, EI Parent Leadership Project, Emergency Preparedness and Family-Professional Partnerships.

**Family TIES of Massachusetts (Together in Enhancing Support):** Family TIES is an information, referral and support network run by and for families of children with special health needs and their providers. Family TIES is a project of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, funded by and in collaboration with DPH. Family TIES Parent Coordinators, located in DPH regional offices across the state, help in finding resources and making Parent to Parent connections. Family TIES also maintains the Central Directory of Early Intervention services. [www.massfamilyties.org](http://www.massfamilyties.org) or 1-800-905-TIES (8437)

**Hearing Aid Program for Children:** The Hearing Aid Program provides financial assistance for the purchase of a Hearing Aid Package to families of children and youth under age 21 who meet certain financial eligibility criteria. All available sources of funding for hearing aids, including health insurance, must be used prior to billing the Hearing Aid Program

**MassCARE** (Massachusetts Community AIDS Resource Enhancement): MassCARE is a statewide program for women, infants, children, youth and families living with HIV. MassCARE provides care at 7 community sites across the state and in 3 regional perinatal centers. Services include access to HIV-related medical care and support services; case management; and family and teen advisory networks.

**MASSTART** (Massachusetts Technology Assistance Resource Team): MASSTART is a free collaborative service that helps families and schools plan for the health care and safety of children and youth with special health needs, especially those assisted by medical technology. MASSTART providers work with families and school personnel, and provide training and consultation for individual children as well as technical assistance.

**Medical Review Team (MRT):** The MRT provides careful screening of any individual under age 22 with multiple disabilities and significant cognitive impairments for whom placement is sought in a pediatric nursing home or skilled nursing facility based on strict medical and cognitive criteria. The MRT is a multi-disciplinary team that includes consumers, medical and health providers, human service agencies and other professionals.

**Pediatric Palliative Care Network (PPCN):** PPCN serves the unmet physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of children with life-limiting illnesses and their families. PPCN's goal is to improve the quality of life of the entire family by supporting them during this time in their child's life. The child must be under age 19. Services include: pain and symptom management; assessment and case management; spiritual care; social services and counseling for the child; respite care; and bereavement care for family members in the event of death.

**SSI and Public Benefits Training and Technical Assistance:** The SSI/Public Benefits Training and Policy Specialist provides up-to-date training and information as federal and state laws and regulations change regarding health care financing. Key activities include: telephone consultation, information and referral, and training programs on public benefit and health financing programs.

**Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Program (UNHSP):** The UNHSP oversees birth hospital/birth center screening and audiological diagnostic center protocols and provides technical assistance and support to these facilities. Each birth hospital and birth center is required to ensure that every baby has his or her hearing screened before going home. Babies who do not pass or miss a hearing screening are referred to audiological diagnostic centers approved by DPH. Families receive support throughout the diagnostic process by UNHSP outreach staff to ensure timely follow-up occurs.

## **How to contact us:**

Contact our Community Support Line, Monday through Friday, from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

1-800-882-1435 within Massachusetts  
(617-624-6060 outside of Massachusetts)  
TTY 617-624-5992

specialhealthneeds@state.ma.us  
www.mass.gov/dph/specialhealthneeds