



It Takes a Village to Raise a Child

Identifying & Navigating Special Needs

The sooner that a family identifies any special needs a child may have, the sooner work can begin to help the child overcome these needs and become the successful individual they can be. Although early intervention is extremely important, intervention at any age is helpful.

Skills such as taking a first step, smiling for the first time, and waving “bye bye” are called **developmental milestones**. [Learn about these milestones here](#) and to see if your child is meeting these milestones within anticipated time frames.

The following is a list of **resources in New Hanover County** for families who have children with special needs. This list may not be all inclusive, and other resources may exist to help you.

Smart Start of NHC can assist you with finding and accessing resources.

910.815.3731

In addition to connecting you with local resources, **the Smart Start of NHC Staff can help** to address child-specific issues in a classroom that need social emotional education or may be related to special needs diagnosis. The **Smart Start Behavior & Inclusion Team** will work to prevent the expulsion of children from child care and will work alongside families to navigate the early intervention system as appropriate.

Smart Start of NHC Parenting Services provides a variety of classes and services to parents and families who live in New Hanover County. SSNHC also provides resources to parents navigating Early Childhood Education, helping to answer questions, point in the right direction, and make referrals to related services.



Screenings & Developmental Assessments

You or a doctor may request additional screenings or assessments for your child.

Well-child visits allow health care professionals to have regular contact with children to assess your child's health and development through periodic developmental screening, a short assessment to determine if a child is learning basic skills when he or she is expected to, or if there are delays. If your child's doctor does not routinely check your child with developmental screening and you have concerns, you should ask that it be done.

The following two organizations conduct these screenings free of charge for New Hanover County families and offer interventions for children should they qualify:

CDSA (Children's Developmental Services Agency) – For children Birth to 36 months

The CDSA provides supports and services to children up to three years who have disabilities or delays in one or more areas of development. If your child qualifies for services, he/she will receive an IFSP (an Individual Family Service Plan). This is a written document that outlines the early intervention services that your child and family will receive.

New Hanover County Schools Preschool Services – For children 36 months through 5 years

School Nurses provide basic care and case management at all New Hanover County schools. Mental health services by referral are available at select schools for moderate to severe behavioral and emotional problems. Call your child's school for your school nurse's contact information or with questions regarding your child's medical needs while attending school.

Once your child is 36 months old, parents will work with NHCS educators to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to help the child be successful in school. An IEP describes the goals the team sets for a child during the school year, as well as any special support needed to help achieve them.

Contact **NHCS Special Education Services** (910) 251-6185 ext. 2300

All children on IEPs have been identified as having a disability and therefore cannot be discriminated against because of their disability under the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504). All students with IEPs and all students on 504 plans are covered by this civil rights legislation.

New Hanover County Schools Pre-K Program

The NHCS Pre-K Program provides services through the NC Pre-K Program, which is a state funded program, Head Start, which is a federal program, and through our local New Hanover County commissioners.

New Hanover County's Health & Human Services (DHHS) - gives NHC residents access to consolidated services and programs from Public Health and Social Services (DSS) under one roof.

DSS provides assistance that helps individuals and families of all ages, particularly children, achieve physical, mental and emotional wellness. It encompasses a broad range of services, including health care, welfare, social work, counseling, adoption, and foster services. DSS intervenes at the request of heads of households or upon observing alarming situations within the home.

Smart Start of New Hanover County

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www.newhanoverkids.org



DSS services programs include:

- Food and Nutrition Services (formerly known as Food Stamps)
- Medicaid, including Long Term Care services
- Child Care assistance (subsidy for child care costs)
- Work First Family Assistance (financial assistance for working families)
- Crisis Intervention (financial assistance for utility and housing payments)
- Transportation Assistance – All Ages
- NC Innovations Waiver - designed to meet the needs of individuals of all ages with Intellectual or Development Disabilities (I/DD) who prefer to get long-term care services and supports in their home or community, rather than in an institutional setting.

The NHC Health Department programs include:

- **Women, Infants and Children (WIC)** - a supplemental nutritional program for women, infants and children up to 5 years of age who meet health and socio-economic eligibility requirements. WIC provides healthy food including milk, eggs, juice, fruits and vegetables, as well as nutritional information and breastfeeding promotion and support.
- **Care Coordination for Children (CC4C)** works with families on a voluntary basis with a goal of improving children's health outcomes. CC4C is an at-risk population management program that currently serves children ages birth to five that have experienced adverse life events (including but not limited to parental substance abuse or neonatal exposure to substances), children discharged from the neonatal care unit and children with special health care needs. There is no cost to the family for this service.
- **Mobile Dental Unit** offers services including oral exams, cleanings, sealants, fluoride treatments, X-rays, fillings and extractions to children ages 3 to 18 without accessible or established dental care or insurance.

Health Insurance

Health insurance may cover costs associated with your child's physical and behavioral needs.

- **NC Health Choice** - Health insurance for low-income children who do not qualify for Medicaid but cannot afford private insurance.
- **Cape Fear HealthNet** - Providing access to health care for the low income and uninsured.

Service Coordination

Community Care of the Lower Cape Fear - provides a care management team of registered nurses and social workers, behavioral health specialists, pharmacists, health care coaches, and member support specialists to help figure out your health care needs and support your provider. No cost to eligible patients.

Exceptional Children's Assistance Center - helps parents navigate the special education system, know their rights, and use their voice. Provides information, support, training and resources to assist families caring for children with special needs from birth to age 26.

VitaLine - provides free prompt, confidential and personal access to health information all day and all night from experienced registered nurses and other professionally trained staff.



Mental Health Services

Trillium - Manages, coordinates, and monitors mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services at little or no cost for ages 3 and up. Covers New Hanover, Brunswick, Pender, and Onslow County.

Coastal Horizons Center - promotes healthier lives, stronger families, and safer communities by providing a broad range of effective, evidence-based substance use, mental health, crisis intervention, justice, and wellness services to persons in need.

RHA Mobile Crisis Unit - Intensive on-site intervention to people of all ages who are experiencing a crisis due to mental health disturbances, developmental disabilities, or addiction. RHA MCM East serves New Hanover, Pender, and Brunswick County. Call 1-844-709-4097

Autism Services

The Wilmington TEACCH® Center - serves individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders in the southeastern region of North Carolina. Services include diagnostic evaluations, treatment planning and implementation, education, consultation, training opportunities, and research.

Autism Society of North Carolina – a statewide network of affiliated programs for families of children with special needs; puts parents in touch with other parents; no cost.

Oasisnc – a non-profit organization committed to providing services targeting a broad range of educational, behavioral, social, and communication needs that particularly benefit individuals with Autism, ADHD, anxiety, and other learning differences.

Additional Disability Services

Disability Rights - A team of attorneys, advocates, paralegals and support staff provide advocacy and legal services at no charge for people with disabilities across North Carolina.

Easter Seals UCP - aims to create opportunities, promote individual choice, and change the lives of children and adults with disabilities by maximizing their individual attention to live, learn and work in their communities.

Family Support Network - A statewide network of affiliated programs for families of children with special needs; puts parents in touch with other parents; no cost.

Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina (PCANC) ensures that prevention is a priority in North Carolina and that all communities have the knowledge, skills and resources needed to prevent child abuse and neglect at the local level. When families feel supported and have access to family-strengthening resources in the community, children are more likely to grow up healthier and ready to reach their fullest potential.

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