

Referral Process Highlights for Children ages birth to 5



Medical providers, child care providers, and families of children between the ages of 0-5 play an essential role in being the early voice expressing concerns about children's development. The earlier a child is connected with supportive services, if there is a qualifying need, the better the outcome developmentally and educationally.

Children under 34.5 months: Families should be connected to the CDSA

Families with concerns about their child's development should call the CDSA directly at the number below. Medical providers can fax referrals to the CDSA by sending a child's demographics page, last well check; immunization records, growth chart, flow sheet, vision/hearing screenings; the CDSA intake coordinator will fill out the referral form and contact the family. Even though the CDSA serves children until the age of three, a new referral will not be started once a child is 34.5 months old because the time taken to complete a referral would bump up against when transition would begin for services offered through the public schools at the age of three. If concerns are voiced for the very first time at the age of 34.5 months, contact should be made with the school systems, listed below. Families should be informed that school systems might take only preliminary steps to begin the referral for a child between 33 and 36 months and may schedule initial screening only once

the child is 36 months old. It is better not to delay connecting with the appropriate school system in this 33-36 month period. If a child has already been receiving services through the CDSA prior to the age of 36 months, the transition process to no-cost public preschool services is smooth. The process can begin as early as 30 months for infant/toddler providers and preschool coordinator to meet child and family while the child continues to receive services, and then at least 90 days prior to the third birthday the school system may begin the process of determining services that will be provided through the school system. It is important to understand that the Federal guidelines a child must meet to receive services from the 0-3 program are lower than those allowed from the preschool program. This can be hard for some families to understand, but actually can mean that a child who no longer qualifies for services from the public schools has made so much progress that certain services, or even all services, might no longer be necessary. The staff from the CDSA and preschool coordinators from the public school systems take care of the transition process, so there is no need for beginning a new referral.

CDSA Intake Coordinator

phone 828-267-6464 • fax 828-267-6480

New Referrals after age 3: Connect with the school district

If a child has either not qualified for services between 0-3, or a new developmental concern is raised after the age of three, referral to the school system preschool program is the first step. With three school systems, families should call the school system where their child will attend school according to the home address. Once the official referral has been made, the school system has 90 days to complete the referral process, including screening and follow-up full evaluations, if necessary to determine services. School contacts:

Catawba County Schools' Preschool Coordinator

phone 828-855-9356 • fax 828-327-0097

Hickory City Schools' Preschool Coordinator

phone 828-322-5860 ext. 1150 • fax 828-326-7101

Newton-Conover City Schools' Preschool Coordinator

phone 828-466-5581 ext. 2137 • fax 828-466-0063

Special Note:

There is no gap in services when a child is transitioning from CDSA provided services to school system provided services. The system has been designed for this exact continuity. However, when a child may have been receiving private services prior to the third birthday, the process of qualifying for services with the public preschool program once the child turns three starts a first-time process with no transition. It is very important to connect families with the CDSA for provision of services prior to the age of 3 to take full advantage of the seamless transition process provided for in the regulations.

Call to Connect:

If you discover families need access to other services, like child care, parenting classes, summer camps or other support resources, have them call the Children's Resource Center. CRC staff are specially trained to do "child care resource & referral" and are the "one stop shop" for connecting Catawba County families to the services they need.

Children's Resource Center

www.childrensresourcecenter.org

828-695-6565

