

Therapy Guide for Neurodivergent and Support Needs Children

This guide is for parents and caregivers raising neurodivergent and support needs children. It breaks down a wide range of therapy options, how to access support, how to pair therapies effectively, and how to pay for them—even if insurance doesn't cover everything. You are not alone on this journey.

Therapies Explained

- Occupational Therapy (OT): Supports fine motor skills, sensory regulation, daily living tasks, and independence.
- Speech & Language Therapy: Improves communication, language development, social interaction, and supports AAC use.
- Physical Therapy (PT): Enhances gross motor skills, mobility, balance, coordination, and strength.
- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): Behavior-focused therapy using structured methods. Includes ESDM and Verbal Behavior.
- NDBI (Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions): Blends ABA strategies with play-based developmental approaches (e.g., JASPER).
- DIR/Floortime: Builds emotional connection and social development through child-led interaction.
- Play Therapy: Uses play to support emotional expression and behavioral growth.
- Feeding Therapy: Helps with sensory food aversions, swallowing difficulties, and transitioning to solids.
- Social Skills Groups: Builds peer interaction, turn-taking, and communication strategies.
- Music Therapy: Uses music to support regulation, emotional expression, and connection.
- Art Therapy: Encourages emotional healing through creative visual arts.
- Developmental Therapy: Focuses on cognitive, emotional, and social milestones.
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Helps older children manage anxiety, emotions, and behavior.
- Sensory Integration Therapy: Supports children in managing sensory input for better focus and participation.
- Vision Therapy: Addresses visual tracking, focus, and eye coordination issues.
- Auditory Integration Therapy: Improves auditory processing through structured listening programs.
- Equine Therapy: Therapeutic horseback riding to promote motor skills and emotional growth.
- Aquatic Therapy: Water-based therapy for physical, sensory, and behavioral benefits.

Therapies That Pair Well Together

Some therapy combinations work especially well when used together:

- Occupational Therapy + Speech Therapy
- Speech Therapy + AAC Support

- Play Therapy + ABA or NDBI
- Occupational Therapy + Feeding Therapy
- Developmental Therapy + Social Skills Groups
- Music Therapy + DIR/Floortime
- CBT + Social Skills Groups (for older children)

Signs of Dysregulation to Watch For

- Frequent meltdowns or emotional outbursts
- Avoidance of specific sounds, textures, or environments
- Increased repetitive behaviors or stimming
- Difficulty sleeping or changes in sleep patterns
- Food refusal or changes in eating habits
- Increased aggression or self-injurious behaviors
- Trouble transitioning between tasks or environments

How to Pay for Therapy Services

Therapies can be expensive, but there are ways to make them affordable or even fully covered.

- Most private insurance and Medicaid plans cover many neurodivergent-related therapies. Call your insurer and ask about:

- Which therapies are covered under my plan?
- Do I need a referral or pre-authorization?
- Are there in-network providers near me?

- If your provider is out-of-network, ask for a 'superbill' to submit for reimbursement. A superbill should include:

- Provider's full name and address
- Child's diagnosis code (ICD-10)
- Procedure code (CPT code) for each service
- Date(s) of service
- Provider's NPI (National Provider Identifier)
- Total amount paid

If your claim is denied, request a letter of medical necessity from your child's doctor and submit an appeal. Persistence matters!

- Other ways to get therapy covered or reduced:

- Medicaid waiver programs (state-specific)
- Early Intervention (for ages 0–3) through your county

- School-based therapy through your child's IEP or 504 Plan
- Local nonprofits and grants (especially for therapies not covered by insurance)
- Faith-based or community programs that offer scholarships or reduced fees

Need Help Covering the Cost?

If your insurance doesn't cover all services or you're paying out of pocket:

- Check the grants shared in our '31 Must-Know Resources' series to help cover therapy, AAC devices, and evaluations.
- Visit our site at <https://itsybitsytoddlerco.com> to access updated April resources, Medicaid guides, and funding support.
- Look for new grant opportunities posted weekly throughout Autism Awareness Month.
- We're continuously updating the directory to include more programs, nonprofits, and inclusive businesses that support neurodivergent and support needs families.