

Specialists for Your Special Child

Families of children with disabilities often need to seek help from medical and other kinds of professionals.

The following is a brief introduction to some of the types of professionals that may be helpful in caring for your child with special needs.

— **Adaptive Physical Education Teacher:**

Physical education teacher with additional training in adapting to needs of children with disabilities and/or special learning needs.

— **Assistive Technology Specialist:** Advanced level special educator or therapist who designs and implements special technologies into school systems for use by students with disabilities.

— **Audiologist:** Licensed professional trained in the evaluation and rehabilitation of persons with disorders of hearing, including such services as comprehensive audiologic testing and design, selection and fitting of hearing aids and classroom amplification systems.

— **Behavioral Developmental Optometrist:** Licensed doctor of optometry who identifies learning-related vision problems. Also performs vision therapy to correct problems.

— **Clinical Geneticist:** Medical professional trained to diagnose and manage genetic disorders of physical, mental, and biochemical systems. Conducts physical examinations, specifies laboratory and imaging tests, and their interpretation, and devises a detailed treatment plan for the individual and family.

— **Developmental Pediatrician:** Pediatrician specializing in caring for children with developmental disabilities, chronic illness, and/or recent injuries. These specialists may or may not provide every day pediatric care, such as coughs, colds, and well checks.

— **Early Intervention Specialist:** Advanced-level professional with education and/or nursing background providing diagnostic and intervention services to high-risk infants, toddlers and preschoolers and their families, aimed at enhancing potential development.

— **Genetic Counselor:** Health professional trained in advising families on what is known about hereditary conditions; conducts history taking and acts as a resource to support services; may specialize in pediatrics and works closely with a geneticist, the medical specialist.

— **Neurolinguist:** A professional with advanced training who specializes in linguistics as a subspecialty of neuroscience; concerned with understanding the relationship between brain functions and language, including the areas of reading, auditory processing, written language and verbal memory.

— **Neuropsychologist:** Professional with specialty post-doctorate fellowship training in how problems and disorders of the brain may affect learning, behavior, and social functioning.

— **Occupational Therapist:** Health professional that helps people learn or relearn the occupations of daily life, such as writing, eating and dressing; evaluates functional skills and teaches adaptive activities towards self-care; may specialize in children with disabilities.

— **Ophthalmologist:** Medical doctor expert in the evaluation, treatment and surgical correction of disorders of the eye; may specialize in children.

— **Optician:** Specialist who fills prescriptions for eye glasses and contact lenses.

— **Orthodontist:** Dentist expert in evaluation and treatment of abnormally positioned teeth.

— **Orthopedist:** Medical doctor focused on prevention and correction of deformities of bones, joints, muscles and connective tissues; may specialize in the care of children.

— **Orthotist:** Specialists in design and application of devices to straighten, correct or assist orthopedic disabilities.

— **Pediatrician:** Medical doctor specializing in total care of infants through adolescents; many with subspecialties such as, allergies, behavior, learning disorders, endocrinology, etc.

— **Pediatric Neurologist:** Medical doctor devoted to evaluation and treatment of children with conditions affecting the nervous system.

— **Pediatric Nurse Practitioner:** An advanced practice RN specializing in routine well-child care, treatment of minor illnesses and management of some chronic disorders for infants through young adults; may work in practice with a physician or independently.

— **Pediatric Physiatrist:** A physician who cares for children who have been recently injured and/or need rehabilitation services.

— **Pedodontist:** Dentist specializing in the care of children's teeth.

— **Physical Therapist:** Health professional concerned with movement dysfunction and the evaluation and treatment of orthopedic and neurologic conditions, performing such functions as assessing joint motion, muscle strength and endurance, and providing therapeutic exercise towards performance of activities of daily living.

— **Psychiatrist:** Medical physician specializing in the treatment and prevention of mental disorders; frequently medical consultant to mental health counselors, such as psychologists and social workers.

— **Recreation Therapist:** Licensed and/or certified professional that selects and provides recreational activities designed to improve function in persons with mental, physical or emotional disabilities.

— **Rehabilitation Engineer:** Biomedical engineering specialist who applies knowledge and skills to the development of assistive devices for people with physical disabilities; works closely with adaptive equipment specialist.

— **Respiratory Therapist:** Health professional trained to conduct diagnostic tests, provide treatment and maintain life support for patients with heart and breathing problems.

— **School Nurse/Specialized Physical Health Care Nurse:** RN providing comprehensive well-child services in schools and specialized interventions for children with chronic physical disabilities.

— **School Psychologist:** Mental health professional who serves as a consultant to teachers and parents to help in understanding how children develop and learn; assesses and tests for a child's abilities, academic achievement, social/emotional development and adaptive behavior; and recommends interventions towards maximum functioning. (Related to child psychologist).

— **Social Worker:** Mental health professional who is especially concerned with well-being in a social context and the environmental forces affecting problems of living; uses skills, such as counseling, to address problems including disability, family conflicts and mental illness; may have specialty certification as school social worker or licensed clinical social work (LCSW).

— **Special Education Teacher:** Educator with a certified designated specialty teaching children with disabilities in a variety of settings or acting as a resource specialist for school programs.

— **Speech/Language Pathologist:** Licensed professionals who evaluate, treat and prevent disorders of communication and swallowing in infants through adults, including work with language, memory and speech disorders.

Note: Professionals may be school-based, agency employees or independent consultants

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