

# Disability Toolkit – Resources in Arizona

Project in collaboration

Jewish Family and Children’s Services (JFCS) and Gesher Disability Resources (Gesher)

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION – WHY?

Purpose of this toolkit – to get you started. Jewish Family & Children’s Service (JFCS) and Gesher Disability Resources (Gesher) often receive calls on disability and aging topics. JFCS and Gesher have worked together to create this toolkit to address the most frequently asked questions. This information applies to anyone living in Arizona.

The resources provide information and expectations for families with a disabled child or adult who find themselves having to care for a person and don’t know what to do.

## It addresses:

- What are questions to ask
- Who to call
- ALTCS/DDD an option & how does it work
- Where to go for medical services
- Alternatives to public school – ESA scholarships for financial assistance
- After high school – Vocational Rehab; DTA/Day Program; Group Supported Employment
- Residential
- Social Security
- Difference between an ABLE Account and Miller’s Trust/Income Only Trust
- Where to find an advocate/navigator

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## DIAGNOSIS

### Why do I need a diagnosis?

In Arizona, individuals with specific disabilities receive state services such as paid medical care, case management, and caregiving services if they are determined to have a qualified diagnosis.

### While there are many disabilities, the four potential qualifiers for state services in Arizona are:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Cerebral Palsy
- Intellectual (Cognitive) Disability
- Epilepsy

### Where do I start?

- 1) Qualified medical professional [see websites below divided by child or adult]. NOTE many offices have 3-6 month waiting lists; remember to ask if that office takes your insurance.
- 2) The Department of Economic Security (DES) provides language assistance free of charge to those with [Limited English Proficiency](#) to ensure meaningful access to programs, services, and activities. Contact your DES office or call 1-855-432-7587 for program assistance provided in your preferred language.
- 3) Other Arizona State Services [see next section]

Resources for children including advocacy: <https://www.azdhs.gov/prevention/womens-childrens-health/ocshcn/index.php>

Resources for Adults: <https://www.healthcare.gov/people-with-disabilities/coverage-options/>

Resources for Grandparents: [https://duetaz.org/grandparents-raising-grandchildren/?gclid=CjwKCAiAlfqOBhAeEiwAYi43F6f-RlcFOIx3r9U-LvPsdX59wz5tjRYvjHLrbb3kiWHdzaTOeBN\\_xoCax8QAvD\\_BwE](https://duetaz.org/grandparents-raising-grandchildren/?gclid=CjwKCAiAlfqOBhAeEiwAYi43F6f-RlcFOIx3r9U-LvPsdX59wz5tjRYvjHLrbb3kiWHdzaTOeBN_xoCax8QAvD_BwE)

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## ARIZONA STATE SERVICES

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (**AHCCCS**) is Arizona's Medicaid agency that offers health care programs to serve Arizona residents. Individuals must meet certain income and other requirements to obtain services. [www.azahcccs.gov](http://www.azahcccs.gov)

Arizona long term care system (**ALTCS**) is Arizona's Medicaid for individuals who need help with their activities of daily living. To qualify, one must meet the level of care the state determines and be within the financial qualifications. Find more information about ALTCS at this site: <https://www.azahcccs.gov/members/ALTCSlocations.html>.

To begin the ALTCS application process, we recommend calling them at 602-417-6600.

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (**DDD**) – empowers individuals with developmental disabilities to lead self-directed, healthy, and meaningful lives. DDD provides supports and services for eligible Arizonans and serves more than 40,000 people with development disabilities and their families throughout Arizona each year.

**DES DDD Customer Service Center** - [DDDCustomerServiceCenter@azdes.gov](mailto:DDDCustomerServiceCenter@azdes.gov)

Toll Free (844) 770-9500; <https://des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-disabilities>

Arizona Early Intervention (**AzeIP**) - The Mission and Key Principles of Early Intervention are the foundation for all early intervention activities in Arizona. All early intervention professionals in Arizona should adhere to these principles as they serve children and families. Part C early intervention builds upon information given to provide supports and resources to assist family members and caregivers. It enhances children's learning and development through everyday learning opportunities.

<https://des.az.gov/services/disabilities/early-intervention/mission-and-key-principles>

First Things First is Arizona's early childhood agency, committed to the healthy development and learning of young children from birth to age 5. [www.firstthingsfirst.org](http://www.firstthingsfirst.org)

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## SOCIAL SECURITY

If you develop a condition as an adult due to a physical or mental illness that is expected to prevent you from working full time for a year or longer and have a work history, you may be eligible to apply for Social Security Disability (**SSDI**) benefits. Over 70% of first-time applications are denied. There is an appeals process that requires all documentation in writing. If you are denied, many people choose to contact a disability attorney. These attorneys collect their fees once a case is settled. They typically will not ask for a down payment or a retainer.

Apply for **SSDI** – learn more at this site: <https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-16.html>

**SSDI** local Attorneys:

Slepian, Smith, Ellexson, PLLC - <https://www.slepian.com/>

Ober Pekas Arizona Disability Attorneys - <https://oprdisabilitylaw.com/>

If you are over 18 and deemed disabled, you could qualify for **SSI** (supplemental security income). There are income and resource restrictions for this benefit. Children with disabilities can get **SSI**, too, but resource limits are deemed from their parents. To find out if you can get **SSI** and learn how to apply, visit this website: <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/ssi/>

**Medicare** (federal insurance) – after being eligible for **SSDI** or **DAC** (Disabled Adult Child) for 24 months, you automatically receive Medicare Part A and Part B, meaning you do not have to apply. Your card will arrive in the mail approximately three (3) months before your 25<sup>th</sup> month of disability. Once you get Medicare Part A and Part B, you then can choose what kind of plan works for you (e.g. pay a premium or not). There are professionals who can review plans with you to help in your decision.

- Straight Medicare (government pays 80%; individual pays 20%)
- Medicare Advantage Plans are HMOs (low to no Part B premium)
- Medicare + a Supplement

Individuals with lower income may be eligible for Medicare cost sharing programs, which pay the Part B premium. Depending upon your income, you may be qualified for Medicaid where the individual pays little to no cost for medical care. In Arizona Medicaid is AHCCCS (see details on AZ State Services page).

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## EDUCATION

Students with learning challenges such as **ADD, ADHD, Dyslexia**, and **Executive Functioning** can find help through evaluations from the public school system, even if they attend a private school. There may be funds available to cover the cost of education services like tutoring with qualified vendors of the public school or tuition at specialty schools if the public school can't service the needs of the student.

### Plans for which a student may qualify:

504 Plan - <https://www.azdisabilitylaw.org/section-504-rehabilitation-act-overview/>

IEP - Individual Education Plan for a public school

ISP – Individual Service Plan for a private school

ESA – Empowerment Scholarship Account Program - <https://www.azed.gov/esa>

### For more specific questions about your student in Arizona:

<https://www.azed.gov/specialeducation/disability-categories>

There are education advocates who may charge a fee but are available to help navigate the school systems. Here are a few:

- <https://azeducationaladvocate.com/>
- Melmed Center <http://www.melmedcenter.com/> (Ricki Light is a Geshher contractor)
- <https://www.parentsupportarizona.com/>

**Transition assessments** – if your student is not planning or able to attend post-secondary classes, college or university, the student may be eligible for school transition planning. Ask your school or the public school district where you live.

Through the assessment, you can discover what skills your student/child has. The result recommendations may include continued education, accessing the community, work as an individual or group supported.

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## CAREER RESOURCES

[This section is meant for individuals who have a declared diagnosis]

- Arizona at Work - <https://arizonaatwork.com/explore-services/disability-access>
- Ability 360 "Ticket to Work" program <https://ability360.org/?s=ticket+to+work>
- Vocational Rehabilitation through DES - <https://des.az.gov/services/employment/rehabilitation-services/vocational-rehabilitation>

If you are under 65, have a disability, and want to go back to work this is possible because your Medicare coverage lasts for as long as you are medically disabled. If you return to work, you will not have to pay your Part A premium for the first 8 ½ years.

Please note: Earning limits may apply. Be sure to ask questions about how much you are eligible to earn without interrupting your benefits.

## SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

There are many places where an individual with disabilities can go to meet others. Some are in the Jewish community and others are not.

- Gesher adult social groups – contact [amy@gesherdr.org](mailto:amy@gesherdr.org)
- Jewish Community Web Portal – [www.JewishPhoenix.com](http://www.JewishPhoenix.com) or [www.jewphx.com](http://www.jewphx.com)
- Ability 360 - <https://ability360.org/sports/>
- Autism Society of Greater Phoenix - <https://phxautism.org/>
- State Day Programs - <https://des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-disabilities/community-resources/day-treatment-and-training>

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## RESIDENTIAL

In the state of Arizona, group housing is difficult to find for individuals with mental health challenges who may have an **SMI** (seriously mentally ill) designation. There are residential options that exist for short-term stay. Most people live in an institution, live on their own or with family. The number of habilitation or oversight hours provided by the state for mental illness tends to be only a few per week. Case managers may be assigned to work with individuals who have mental illness.

Individuals with Intellectual or Development Disabilities (**ID** or **DD**) have several options. Below is a list by level of care needed.

- Comparison chart of residential options from DES
  - <https://des.az.gov/sites/default/files/dl/DDD-1857A.pdf?time=1651851688668>
- Live at home and the parent(s) can be state appointed and paid caregivers
- **IDLA** (individually designed living arrangement)
  - Not licensed or monitored by DDD; choice of roommate and location
  - Residents have some level of independence
  - Gesher Disability Resources' 2 homes are IDLA; no vacancies at this time
  - If you are interested in starting a new home, contact the office **480-629-5343** and be prepared to share if you have potential roommates and the ability to assist with the cost of purchasing a home. Gesher homes are owned by the agency, no mortgages. Residents cover operating costs typically paid from their SSDI/SSI/DAC; Caregiving staff contracted by the resident typically through their DDD/ALTCS state provided services
- Developmental home (like an institution)
  - <https://des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-disabilities/certification-licensing/developmental-home-licensing> (site includes list of homes)
- Group Home
  - Licensed and monitored by the state; no choice of roommate; location depends upon where there is an opening (waiting lists may apply)
  - Residents have high need of supervision
  - Check with your Case Manager for list of state licensed organizations

### Supportive Housing for young adults

- First Place - <https://www.firstplaceaz.org/>
- Treasure House - <https://www.treasurehouse.org/>
- Luna Azul - <https://www.lunaphx.com/>
- Gesher Disability Resources – [www.gesherdr.org](http://www.gesherdr.org)
- <https://www.azahcccs.gov/AHCCCS/Initiatives/AHP/>

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## OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

- ❖ ABLE Accounts (tax-advantaged savings accounts that can fund disability expenses) <https://www.ablenrc.org/what-is-able/what-are-able-accounts/>
- ❖ Elder Law - a wide range of legal matters affecting an older or disabled person, including issues related to health care, long term care planning, guardianship, retirement, Social Security, Medicare/Medicaid, and other important matters.
- ❖ Special Needs Trust - a legal arrangement and [fiduciary relationship](#) that allows a physically or mentally disabled or chronically ill person to receive income without reducing their eligibility for the public assistance disability benefits provided by [Social Security](#), Supplemental Security Income, Medicare or Medicaid. (Many attorneys in Arizona can help with this for a fee.)
- ❖ Estate Planning - the process of designating who will receive your assets and handle your responsibilities after your death or incapacitation. One goal is to ensure beneficiaries receive assets in a way that minimizes estate tax, gift tax, income tax and other taxes.
- ❖ Ombudsman - an official appointed to investigate individuals' complaints against maladministration, especially that of public authorities.
- ❖ Arizona Center for Disability Law (ACDL) <https://www.azdisabilitylaw.org/>
- ❖ Adult Protective Services - <https://des.az.gov/services/basic-needs/adult-protective-services>
- ❖ National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) - <http://www.namiarizona.org/>
- ❖ Area Agency on Aging - <https://www.aaaphx.org/>
- ❖ Birth to 5 Helpline – Call 877-705-KIDS (5437) for Free Child Development Support or visit <https://www.swhd.org/programs/health-and-development/birth-to-five-helpline/>
- ❖ Childcare Resources & Referral - [www.azccrr.com](http://www.azccrr.com)

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

**You can continue to call the offices directly for more personal/detailed questions if needed.**

**Gesher – (480) 629-5343**

[www.gesherdr.org](http://www.gesherdr.org)

**JFCS – (602) 279-7655**

[www.jfcsaz.org](http://www.jfcsaz.org)

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