

Frequently Asked Questions About the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD)

Who Are We?

Although we are called a Center, we are not a place where people with autism and related disabilities come to stay and receive services. We are a nonresidential program, meaning that our staff members travel to visit our constituents in their homes or schools or wherever assistance is requested. The state of Florida is divided by counties into seven regions with CARD professionals serving each area. Because our program is funded by the Florida legislature, all of our services are free.

Who Do We Serve?

CARD serves children and adults of all levels of intellectual functioning who have autism, autistic-like disabilities, pervasive developmental disorders, dual sensory impairments (deaf-blindness), or a vision or hearing loss in addition to other disabling conditions. It is a requirement of the legislation, which created CARD, that we have documentation of a qualifying diagnosis in order for an individual to receive our services; however, we do not withhold services from a family if they are actively seeking a diagnosis. For example, if autistic characteristics are present and autism or a related disability is suspected but you have been unable to see a doctor yet for an evaluation, we will still assist while you are waiting for a diagnosis. It is not uncommon for parents to call us for information on where they can go for a diagnostic evaluation if they need one for their child and do not know where to start.

What Do We Do?

An average case for us usually goes something like this: A parent will call after having a child recently diagnosed with autism or a related disability. The diagnosis can be made by a physician, such as a pediatrician, psychiatrist or neurologist, or by a licensed psychologist. We will do what we call an *intake*, where we record all the basic information on the child and his/her family such as address, telephone, age, school, current therapies, health status and current concerns.

Some parents will only be calling to have their child put on our database and to receive information about our program and/or autism in general but will not currently need our services. Other parents will request our involvement at that point for a number of reasons: their child might be having aggressive outbursts, trouble communicating, difficulty at school, toilet training problems or other behaviors with which the parents want help.

At that point one of our staff members will take their case and begin to assist them. Most of the time this involves a home visit and/or school visit, in order to meet the child, parents and teacher. Then the staff member will make recommendations for ways to improve the

situation. For example, the staff member may suggest using a picture schedule to help with communication or starting a program to help with toilet training. The staff member can help to set up the programs and train the parents, teachers and aides in how to implement them.

Keep in mind that the above example is an average case for CARD, but we serve people of all ages with autism or a related disability and their families, not just children.

What Do You Need To Do?

Just call us. We will do the short intake (usually about ten or fifteen minutes) and start the process. If your child's difficulties are occurring at school, we ask that you contact the school, teacher or principal, tell them about CARD, and ask them to call us and invite us into their classroom after you have registered with us. In order to foster a cooperative relationship, it is our policy to enter a classroom or other facility only if we have been invited.

How Long Will You Stay Involved?

We will stay involved for as long as it takes for the family to feel they are able to cope with the child's disability without our support. We only ask that the family cooperate with us and continue to do their part in supporting the child with autism.

How Often Can We Call You?

You can call us as often as you need. We only have a small staff to serve seven counties in central Florida so we are not always immediately available but we will get back to you as soon as possible. Some families call often and some hardly ever. We do not have enough manpower to do much follow-up so we rely on the families to call us when they need support.

Can I Have My Child Diagnosed At CARD?

No, CARD staff are not able to perform diagnostic evaluations but we will help families find a qualified professional if they are seeking a diagnosis.

How Do You Contact Us or Get More Information?

Address:

UCF CARD

12001 Science Drive, Suite 145

Orlando, FL 32826

Phone: 407-737-2566

Toll Free: 888-558-1908

Fax: 407-737-2571

Email: ucfcard@mail.ucf.edu

Web Site: www.ucf-card.org