



Screening Requirements for Autism Spectrum Disorder

Per [California Department of Health Care Services \(DHCS\) Policy Letter 18-006](#), federal law requires care providers to screen children younger than 21 who are enrolled in Medi-Cal for autism spectrum disorder. This requirement is part of the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) guidelines. Please follow these requirements when screening children for autism spectrum disorder.

Autism Spectrum Disorder Overview

Autism spectrum disorder is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. A diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder now includes several conditions that were previously diagnosed separately: autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified, and Asperger syndrome. These conditions are now all called autism spectrum disorder.

When to Screen Children for Autism Spectrum Disorder

DHCS requires care providers to screen children enrolled in Medi-Cal for autism spectrum disorder:

- At ages 18 months and 24 months
- Prior to age 18 months if the child has a sibling with a diagnosis of autism and/or the child's parent or guardian has expressed concerns about autism

Screening Children for Autism Spectrum Disorder

When screening children for autism spectrum disorder, we recommend administering the Ages and Stages Autism Screening Questionnaire – Third Edition (ASQ[®]-3). You can request a hard copy of the ASQ-3 by emailing uhccscaqualitydepartment_dl@ds.uhc.com.

The ASQ-3 is designed to screen children for developmental delays and identify those who may need further evaluation. It's available in English, Spanish, Arabic and Vietnamese and can be administered at the child's 9-, 18-, 24- or 30-month visits. Please refer to the ASQ-3 Quick Start Guide before administering the questionnaire. The quick start guide offers instructions for:

- Administering, completing and scoring the questionnaire
- Interpreting the results
- Communicating the results to the child's parent or guardian

The ASQ-3 should be completed by the child's representative, such as a parent or guardian attending the assessment. The parent or guardian will answer questions about their child in these areas:

- Communication
- Gross motor
- Fine motor
- Problem solving

- Personal-social
- Overall concerns

Scoring the ASQ-3

After completing the ASQ-3, score it and transfer the total scores and overall responses to the ASQ-3 Information Summary document. When completing the Information Summary, you should also document what follow-up action has been taken. The completed ASQ-3 and Information Summary document must be included in the child's medical record.

Additional Tools for Autism Spectrum Disorder Screening

You may use the following documents during the screening process:

- **Parent Conference Sheet:** Findings and discussion of the child's development used to facilitate discussion of the child's strengths, areas of concern and follow-up action taken
- **Child Monitoring Sheet:** Track autism spectrum disorder screening results over time in the areas of communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, personal-social and overall concerns; results are documented as "Well above," "Monitor" or "Below"

To request hard copies of the ASQ-3 tools, please email uhccscaqualitydepartment_dl@ds.uhc.com.

Additional Guidelines

If your screening examination indicates the need for further evaluation of a child's health, the child must be appropriately referred for medically necessary diagnosis and treatment without delay.

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of California provides medically necessary behavioral health services for children with autism spectrum disorder who meet eligibility criteria for services.

We're Here to Help

If you have questions, please email our Quality Department at uhccscaqualitydepartment_dl@ds.uhc.com. Thank you.