CONTENT FOR SPECIALIZED CARE FOR CHILDREN WEBSITE

~~HOME~~

*Serving Illinois Children with Special Health Care Needs*

**We’re here to help.**

Specialized Care for Children provides free Care Coordination for families of children with special health care needs in Illinois.

**How We Help.**

How exactly we help you and your child depends on your specific preferences and needs. Our Care Coordinators can support you in the following areas:

* Accessing free diagnostic tests
* Developing a care plan
* Using insurance & AllKids/Medicaid
* Preparing for transition
* Finding specialized medical care
* Communicating with doctors, specialists, & schools
* Finding resources & information
* Paying for certain medical expenses

**Who We Help.**

## Over 16,000 families in all 102 counties in the State of Illinois annually receive services from Specialized Care for Children.

## FOOTER:

**We’re here to help.**

Specialized Care for Children provides free Care Coordination for families of children with special health care needs in Illinois.

**Contact us.**

P: (XXX)XXX-XXXX

TTY: (XXX)XXX-XXXX

F: (XXX)XXX-XXXX

HOURS: M-F, 8:00am-4:30pm

Request a callback

Contact us

See employment opportunities

**Get our newsletter.**

Name [single line field]

Email [single line field]

Submit

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How We Help: Personalized Care Coordination

How exactly we help you and your child depends on your specific preferences and needs, but Care Coordination is always at the heart of how we help.

As soon as you have contacted us and are in our system, we assign your family a Care Coordinator—a Specialized Care for Children staff person, who is a nurse, social worker, speech pathologist or audiologist, and who draws on the knowledge and expertise of our entire network and 75+ year history. Your Care Coordinator, along with a Program Coordinator Assistant, will be based in the Specialized Care for Children office that covers your geographic region.

Your Care Coordinator is your main point of contact at Specialized Care for Children, answering your questions and leading the team that’s dedicated to meeting your child’s medical, social, and educational needs. As needed, your Care Coordinator will include your child’s doctors and teachers in the conversations and plans, to ensure everyone is working together.

**How Care Coordination can help your child**

**Diagnostic tests** are available at no cost, allowing you to quickly find out if your child has an eligible medical condition.

**Care plans** are developed for your child’s specific situation, helping you set and track goals and ensure everyone who cares for your child is on the same page.

**Insurance questions** are answered as our experts help you navigate and get the most out of your specific plan.

**Transition support** helps you prepare for and manage the changes your child will go through as she or he ages.

**Specialized care** **providers** are recommended from our pool of experts, according to your child’s medical needs and where your family lives.

**Communication** with your child’s providers, school, and other groups or individuals is provided, while your own advocacy skills are sharpened.

**Resources & information** are shared with you whenever you need help finding a service we don’t directly provide.

**Financial support** is offered to families who qualify, for a variety of needs, from care-related travel expenses to medical equipment.

**Accessing free diagnostic tests**

The first step toward helping your child reach his or her full potential is getting a clear diagnosis you can trust.

We can help you get free testing for your child through our approved providers, whether you are just starting the diagnosis process or you need a second opinion or further testing with a specialist. The goal is to find out if your family is eligible for our support and then to get you the help you need.

Call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** to arrange a free diagnostic test.

**Developing a Care Plan**

When your child’s medical journey is long and full of unexpected detours, having a road map can provide a life-changing sense of calm and hope.

Our Care Coordinators have the knowledge and experience to understand the complexity of your child’s specific needs, and to work with you to create a tailored plan.

Care plans are designed to help you set and track goals, to make sure your child’s care is coordinated between various providers, and to provide clear communication between everyone who helps care for your child.

Call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** to learn more.

# Using insurance & All Kids/Medicaid

Today’s insurance system isn’t exactly user-friendly—especially for families dealing with complicated medical issues.

Our Care Coordinators can help you understand what your insurance policy offers and get the most out of your benefits. We’ll also help find specialists covered by your policy (including All Kids and Medicaid), and then we’ll make sure you can actually get your child to those specialists. Best of all, we educate you along the way, so you’ll soon be a pro, too!

Call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** to get answers to your insurance questions.

# Preparing for Transition

The challenges you face will shift and change as your child ages and learns more independent skills.

For some children, transitioning into adulthood can mean taking big steps like getting a job and moving out of your home. Other transitions simply happen when it’s time for your child to move from pediatric doctors to adult doctors, or when your child ages out of services like All Kids insurance or our program (which is provided until a child’s 22nd birthday).

Whatever the transitions are, there’s a lot to consider, from paperwork and skills training to emotional adjustments for the entire family (let’s face it—parents sometimes need more transition support than our kids do!).

As you move toward those changes, they can bring both stress and hope. We can help you be proactive by identifying hurdles before you reach them, and by directing you to the services and strategies that will make the transitions as smooth as possible.

Browse transition resources »

Call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** to learn more.

# Finding specialized medical care

It can be hard enough to find a provider who’s an expert in your child’s specific health issues, let alone one who also has openings, is close to home, and works within your insurance coverage.

We’ve spent more than 75 years building relationships with the best doctors for children with special needs, and we’re more than ready to put that knowledge to work for you. Not only do we fully understand the different conditions that require specialized care, we’ve worked first-hand with an impressive pool of specialists in and around Illinois. That means you can trust our recommendations and quickly move forward getting your child the care she or he needs.

Call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** so we can connect you to the best specialist for your child's needs.

# Communicating with doctors, specialists, & schools

Sometimes the thing you need most isn’t a new treatment or piece of equipment, it’s someone who fully understands your child’s needs and rights, and can speak up on your behalf.

Much of our work is done in schools, but we also act on a family’s behalf at doctors’ offices, and with various social services, agencies, and insurance companies. The goals are to make sure your wants and needs are heard and acted upon, and to teach you, along the way, how to improve your own communication skills, so you can open up doors for your child even when we’re not there.

Call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** to learn more.

# Finding Resources & Information

There’s no shortage of information out there, but finding the right web page, phone number, or name, when you need it, can be overwhelming.

Whatever you’re looking for—home modifications, respite or training for providers, dental care, counseling, or financial support—we’ll help by pointing you in the right direction. We know you’ll have needs that our program doesn’t cover, so we’ve built the relationships and connections needed to quickly put you in touch with people who can help fill those gaps.

Browse our Resource Directory »

Or, call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** so we can connect you with the resources you need.

# Paying for certain medical expenses

When your child needs special care, money might be the last thing you want to think about, but it’s often one of the first things to stress you out.

In some cases, we are able to provide financial help to families who meet the requirements—our range is based on income and family size. But even if you don’t meet the requirements for financial support, we can help in many other valuable ways that can ease financial stress, like creating a tailored care plan, making the most of your insurance, or pointing you in the direction of other financial help and services.

Call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** to learn more.

# Who We Are

To put it most simply, Specialized Care for Children provides free Care Coordination for families of children with special health care needs in Illinois.

But there are also many other ways to tell the story of who we are as an organization. We are shaped by our 75+ year history and by the current news and happenings that take place each day. And more than anything, we are a diverse group of people that includes not just those on our staff, Medical Advisory Board, and our Family Advisory Council, but also each and every family we work with across the state of Illinois. We hope you’ll get to know us and that we can get to know you!

### About us

What we do and why we do it, in a nutshell.

### Our staff

Learn about the people who ultimately help the families in our programs.

### History

An overview of our 75+ year history helping children with special needs.

### Family Advisory Council

A look at the role the council plays in our organization.

### News

Stay up to date on happenings, stories, and current events that impact our community.

### Family stories

Some of the people we’ve worked with and how their lives have changed.

### Medical Advisory Board

Who is on the Board and what they do.

### Employment opportunities

Help us help children with special needs!

# About us

Since 1937, we’ve been helping Illinois children with special needs reach their full potential.

We believe a big part of meeting the needs of children is meeting the needs of their families and caregivers. That’s why the care our agency coordinates and provides is family-centered—we focus on partnering with you, listening to your needs and preferences and then tailoring a plan for how we can best help you move forward in a coordinated, confident way.

At first, that care might look like helping you get a diagnosis and learn more about your child’s condition. Later, you might need help arranging special medical care, working with your child’s doctors and teachers, or making the most of your insurance plan. Down the road, we’ll help smooth your child’s transition into adulthood.

Whatever your needs are, the staff at our xx regional offices have the experience, knowledge, and networks to guide you along the way.

Call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** to learn more.

# ~~Our staff~~

Sample staff bios:

**Sharla Luken**

Regional Manager of the Chicago CORE program

*When did you join Specialized Care for Children?*

I joined the staff in 1997 as a part time audiologist in the DuPage regional office.

*What led you to work for Specialized Care for Children?*

Previously, I worked as an audiologist with the City of Chicago Department of Health and at that time, we routinely referred our hearing loss children to Specialized Care for Children for hearing aids. Everyone at the agency was always helpful and did an excellent job in following up on clients and with their referral sources. My colleagues and I always felt that Specialized Care for Children was a great agency!

*What’s one of the most rewarding aspects of your work?*

Providing advocacy for our children and educating parents how to successfully advocate for their own children.

**Shannon Jones**

Regional Manager of the Rockford Regional Office

*What led you to work for Specialized Care for Children?*

Shortly after I started working at Specialized Care for Children, I became pregnant with my first child, Michaela. During my pregnancy I was questioning whether Specialized Care for Children was the right fit for me, and I was contemplating seeking a different position, however, after I had Michaela, everything changed as Michaela was born with Down syndrome. Having Michaela in my life helped me approach my job as a care coordinator in a totally different light as I had a better understanding of what some of the families I was serving experienced and could better anticipate some of their needs. Now I can’t imagine being anywhere else, I love what I do and take every opportunity I can to help spread the word about Specialized Care for Children.

*If you could share one message with the families of kids with special needs, what would it be?*

Hang in there. I know personally that it can be very draining yet rewarding to be the parent of a child with special needs. I think it is so crucial to reach out to others who have been in your shoes for support and networking opportunities. Join a support group or if you don’t have a support group in your area, start one.

# History

In 1935, a Social Security Act enabled states to “extend and improve services for crippled children.” Two years later, the Governor of Illinois issued an executive order to create the Division of Physically Handicapped Children in the Department of Public Welfare. This division, created to receive federal funds and administer services to the state’s children with special needs, became what is known today as the Division of Specialized Care for Children.

The division was transferred to the University of Illinois in 1941, and by the agency’s 10th anniversary in 1947, more than 50,000 children had been registered and helped. In 1991, our name was officially changed to the Division of Specialized Care for Children.

Today, over 16,000 families in all 102 counties in Illinois annually receive some form of help from Specialized Care for Children. Services are coordinated by a network of highly professional staff, working out of 13 regional offices across the state. We consistently draw on the networks and knowledge we’ve built over the decades, while staying up to date on ever-changing insurance, health, and policy issues.

Much has changed in the 75+ years since our agency was founded, from the language we use to talk about children with special needs to the medical advancements and insurance plans that support them. What hasn’t changed is our dedication to improving the lives of these children and the families who care for them. We’re here to help.

# ~~Family Stories~~

*Sample Family Story:*

**“It’s good to know we’re just not alone…”**

By the time Drew was two years old, he had become a “regular” at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, which wasn’t exactly a quick commute from his family’s rural home.

After a typical pregnancy and birth, Drew was diagnosed with a heart murmur and the congenital heart defect PDA. His mother, Kim, says they spent the first six months of his life in and out of the hospital, trying to keep him healthy. Even after heart surgery at 18 months corrected the defect, Drew was on a feeding tube until he was two, didn’t walk until he was three (and needs braces to do so), and has issues with his eyes.

As the wife of a farmer and busy mother of four, Kim was grateful to hear about Specialized Care for Children during one of their frequent visits to Rush.

“I kept finding out things we didn’t know, like mileage is covered when we went to the hospital,” she says of her newfound connection to Specialized Care for Children. “I found out that a lot of different specialists, like cardiologists, that weren’t covered by insurance could be covered by Specialized Care for Children, and many medical supplies, too. We were able to do so much more for Drew with the money we were able to save.”

Eventually Kim became a member of the Family Advisory Committee, where she has built relationships and gained much-needed parent-to-parent support.

“It’s almost like a counseling session for me,” Kim says. “It’s good to know we’re just not alone, that there are other parents like us—we all are looking to put our children first. My child’s health needs are not as severe as others — they’ve helped me realize that our needs are just as important, too—that Drew is just as important as the other children served by [Specialized Care for Children].”

And now Kim is able to support other parents, especially those who are new to the world of specialized care.

“My advice is just to ask for help. If you need any kind of support, just ask for help. Don’t be afraid—there are no dumb questions. Hopefully [Specialized Care for Children] can help you get services for your child.”

# Our Programs

We help families of children with special needs through two key programs: the Core Program and the Home Care Program. The Core Program is the program most of our families are served by. Children who are medically fragile and technology dependent are also served through the Home Care Program. Eligibility for either program depends on the results of diagnostic testing.

Call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** to learn more.

# - Core Program

Care coordination is at the heart of the Core Program, along with the other areas of support listed in the “How We Help” section of our website. Children who have eligible chronic health issues, but are not considered medically fragile and technology dependent are enrolled in the Core Program. This program may support some financial needs such as therapy, specialized equipment, and travel expense related to medical appointments and treatment, but does not support in-home care.

Call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** to learn more.

# - Home Care Program

**Families with children who are medically fragile and technology dependent can apply to the Home Care Program, which provides** coordination and services to support caring for your child at home. The Home Care Program also provides care coordination and some of the other areas of support listed in the “How we help” section of our website.

Specialized Care for Children operates this waiver program on behalf of the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS).

Call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** to learn more.

# Parent to Parent Support

Knowing that you are not alone can be one of the most important gifts you’ll receive as a parent of a child with special medical needs.

Other parents who have felt the same confusion, fear, and exhaustion as you can share both practical advice and emotional support you need to move forward.

While Specialized Care for Children does not formally organize parent support groups, many parents naturally connect with one another through our services, and we do our best to help parents find others who can educate and support them. Whether you meet other parents by getting involved on the Parent Advisory Council, or we point you in the direction of a support group in your area or online forum, we do whatever we can to help you make these important connections.

Browse Support Resources »

Or, call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or**send us an email** to learn more.

# How to apply

<http://share.axure.com/W0ZMJP/Apply.html>

Filling out an application is pretty straight forward, but we’re always happy to answer questions along the way. Staff can assist by phone or in person at our office. We can even arrange to meet you at your home or another convenient location, if that helps.

To apply to the Core Program or Home Care Program, you can either print out forms to fill in by hand, fill in the forms electronically then print them, or contact a Specialized Care for Children Regional Office to request that the forms be mailed to you.

After you print and complete the application, it should be mailed to your regional Specialized Care for Children office. If you need help determining which region you’re in, use our Find an Office page.

A Care Coordination team at your regional office will review your application then send you an authorization to release health information (within 5 days of initial contact). Medical records are necessary to confirm whether your child has an eligible condition.

There are three key factors that determine eligibility for our Core Program:  
1. Residency in the state of Illinois  
2. Age (the child requiring services must be under 21 years of age)  
3. Diagnosis of a medically eligible condition (see Is My Child Eligible?)

To be considered for financial assistance, in addition to our free Core Program services, we require proof of U.S. citizenship (of either the child or the legally responsible adult) and submission of financial documents.

If you believe your child may be eligible for the Home Care Program (i.e. has a condition considered medically fragile and technology dependent), the Care Coordination team will work with you to gather the information necessary to complete the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services application packet.

Most families know within 30 days if their child is eligible for the Core Program, but it can take longer if there is a delay receiving authorization forms or financial/medical records. We work as quickly as we can to determine if and how we can help your child—our goal is to begin making a difference in the life of your family as soon as possible!

# Is my child eligible?

We are able to help children who are residents of Illinois, are under the age of 21, and have certain chronic, treatable conditions.

The categories of eligible conditions include those listed below. (If you don’t yet have a clear diagnosis for your child, we can help you get free testing through our approved providers.) If you think your child may be eligible, contact us to complete an application.

• Cardiac Impairments

• Cystic Fibrosis

• Eye Impairments (cataracts, muscle imbalances and others)

• External Body Impairments (cleft lip and palate, craniosynostosis,

etc.)

• Hearing Impairments (cholesteatoma, hearing loss that meets DSCC

guidelines and others)

• Hemophilia (Von Willebrand Disease and other bleeding

impairments)

• Inborn Errors of Metabolism (phenylketonuria [PKU] and others)

• Nervous System Impairments (seizures, dystrophy and others)

• Orthopedic Impairments (club feet, scoliosis and others)

• Speech Impairments (dysphasia, vocal cord paralysis and others)

• Urinary System Impairments (urethral reflux, neurogenic bladder

and others)

Even if you don't see your child's condition listed above, call us at **(xxx) xxx-xxxx** or **send us an email** to see if there's a way that we can help your family.

# Contact us: (FORM)

Every child and family has unique situations and needs. Whether you’d rather send an email, talk on the phone, or stop by one of our regional offices---we’re here for you and we’re here to help.