

Family Education Sheet

Social Skills Groups and Resources in Massachusetts



Boston Children's Hospital
Autism Spectrum Center

childrenshospital.org/
autismspectrumcenter

What are social skills groups?

Social skills groups give children and teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) a chance to practice skills in a supported and structured environment. Groups may help develop or improve skills like:

- Self-awareness
- Controlling emotions
- Reading social cues
- Relationship skills
- Making friends
- Problem solving
- Social communication
- Many other skills

Social skills groups can take place in many different settings, including community centers, private practices, and schools. Social skills groups are different from play groups or leisure groups, because they include skills instruction.

Finding a social skills group and cost

To start your search for a social skills group:

- 1 Contact** your local Autism Support Center
 - Autism Support Centers: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/autism-support-centers-list>
- 2 Explore** online resources
 - Asperger/Autism Network (AANE)'s "How to Choose a Social Skills Group for Your Child": <http://www.aane.org/choose-social-skills-group-child/>
 - INDEX Resource Database: <https://disabilityinfo.org/>
 - Exceptional Lives Database: <https://directory.exceptionallives.org>
- 3 Connect** with other parents and families
 - Mass Family TIES Parent-to-Parent Program: <https://www.massfamilyties.org/parent-to-parent-program/>
 - Mass Family Voices Listserv: <https://fcsn.org/mfv/>

Insurance coverage and cost

Most social skills groups are **not** covered by insurance, but we recommend you speak with your health insurance

company for more information. Some groups are free or offer sliding-scale fees or waivers. Be sure to ask about insurance coverage or possible help with payment when you call a social skills group. If your child has a Department of Developmental Services (DDS) coordinator, you can ask that person about financial support. If your child is already receiving applied behavioral analysis (ABA), speech therapy, or is involved in a summer camp, be sure to ask if they also offer social groups!

Other ways to support your child's social skills

At School:

- Ask the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to include a social skills goal in your child's IEP.
- Ask about school-based social skills programs like a "lunch bunch" or an after-school program.
- Be sure your child receives appropriate speech therapy—speech therapists can help children with ASD work on social pragmatics-- what we say, how we say it, our body language and whether it is appropriate to the given situation.

At Home:

- Ask your child's ABA therapist to create a social skills goal—ABA can be an effective way to teach social skills!
- If your child has a private speech therapist (at home or at a center), ask about including social language skills in therapy.

Resources

Explore child-focused and parent-focused books, apps and other resources connected to building social skills. Below is a list of online resources and popular books on this subject:

- Autism Speaks' Social/Communication App Database: autismspeaks.org/autism-apps
- Jessica Kingsley Publishers: [jkp.com/](https://www.jkp.com/)
- Social Thinking: [socialthinking.com/](https://www.socialthinking.com/)
- Social Stories: [carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories/](https://www.carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories/)

DISCLAIMER: These resources were created to help Boston Children's Hospital's patients and families. The Autism Spectrum Center is not recommending or rating these resources and this is not meant to be a complete listing. The information was accurate at the time of publication. Please contact us at

AutismCenter@childrens.harvard.edu if the information in this guide needs to be updated or if you have questions or concerns.