



Funding Guide for Autism & Special Needs Families

2026 Edition - with official links, eligibility requirements, and how-to-apply steps

This guide was built to help Super Kids families identify practical funding options for ABA therapy, related therapies, education, assistive communication, and long-term disability support.

It focuses on Florida-friendly options, including state scholarships, nonprofit grants, government programs, and Down syndrome resources that may be especially useful for families navigating ASD, Down syndrome, or other developmental disabilities.

Important Note Before You Apply

Award amounts, income rules, provider requirements, and application windows can change during the year.

Use this guide as a planning tool but always confirm the latest rules on the official program website before submitting.

When a program asks for a diagnosis report, it is usually safest to upload the most recent full evaluation available.



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🌐 superkidsaba.com
✉️ hello@superkidsaba.com

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📍 17121 NE 6t Ave, NMB, FL 33162.
☎️ 305-952-3161

★ **STAR CENTER**
📍 16201 NE 13th Ave, NMB, FL 33162.
☎️ 786-955-6224



How To Use This Guide

This edition is designed for fast parent decision-making. Each funding option includes four things' families usually need most: the official website, who typically qualifies, how to apply, and the most relevant timeline or cycle information available at the time this guide was prepared.

Suggested order for SK families

1. Start with **Florida State Scholarships** if your child qualifies. These are usually the largest funding sources.
2. Add **therapy or equipment grants** for copays, uncovered services, communication devices, or special items.
3. Review **government programs** such as APD and SSI for longer-term support.
4. If your child has **Down Syndrome**, check the Florida-specific Down Syndrome Foundation options too.

Parent Application Checklist

- Current diagnostic evaluation or physician documentation
- Proof of Florida residency
- Birth certificate or proof of age when requested
- Most recent tax return, SSI award letter, or income proof
- Insurance card and explanation of benefits (EOB), if the grant requires insurance review
- Provider estimate, invoice, treatment plan, or recommendation letter
- A short family statement explaining financial need and why the request matters now

Super Kids Best-Practice Tip

Families often waste time because they wait to gather documents after a grant opens. Keeping one digital folder with diagnosis, tax return, insurance information, and therapy invoices can make applications much faster.



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Quick Comparison Table

Program	Main use	Who fits best	Timing
FES-UA	Education savings account that can pay for therapies and educational supports	Florida students in private school or homeschool with qualifying disabilities such as autism, Down syndrome and many more	Applications opened Feb. 1, 2026 ; Renewal deadline Apr. 30 ; New applications through Nov. 15
Autism Hero Project-Medical Insurance Grant	Financial support for ABA therapy when insurance leaves gaps (copays, premiums, cost sharing)	Florida children with autism pursuing at least 12 ABA hours weekly	Application cycle (for 2027 funding) is expected to open in Fall 2026, usually around September-October 2026
Autism Care Today (ACT Today) Grant.	Therapy, safety equipment or therapy-related supports	Families needing autism-related treatment or supports	Quarterly application windows: Jan 1-31, Apr 1-30, Jul 1-31, Oct 1-31
MyGOAL Autism Grant	Need-based autism support for medical, educational, or enrichment needs.	Primary caregivers of individuals with autism whose needs are not covered by insurance or school programs.	Feb. 1 through Apr. 30 2026
National Autism Association- Give A Voice Program.	Provides communication devices (iPad with AAC apps) for non-speaking or minimally speaking individuals with autism.	Families of autistic individuals age 5+ who need communication tools and have a speech-language evaluation.	Applications accepted while funding is available (no fixed deadline)
UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation (UHCCF)	Helps pay for medical services, therapies, equipment, and health-related cost not fully covered by insurance.	Children 16 or younger with commercial health insurance whose families still face high out-of-pocket costs.	Rolling applications year-round.
Special Angels Foundation	Funding for therapy, equipment, medical copays, or quality-of-life support for children with special needs.	U.S. families with children under 18 who have special needs and can provide a letter of medical necessity.	Depending on foundation cycles and available funding; families must check the site.
Florida APD- iBudget Waiver	Long-term disability services such as behavior support, respite care, and developmental disability services.	Florida residents age 3+ with qualifying developmental disabilities (including severe autism or Down syndrome).	Applications accepted year-round; waitlists can be long, so early application is recommended.





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Program	Main use	Who fits best	Timing
Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Children.	Monthly financial support for families of children with disabilities who meet income limits.	Children under 18 with severe functional limitations due to disability and families meeting SSI financial eligibility.	Applications are open all year (no deadline).
Down Syndrome Foundation of Florida – ABA Scholarship.	Financial assistance for ABA therapy for individuals with Down syndrome.	Florida families with a child with Down syndrome needing behavior or skill-building support.	Awards each semester: January, May, September. Summer Scholarships are open, applications will be accepted until Monday, April 6, 2026.
Down Syndrome Foundation of Florida- Educational Scholarship.	Funding for tutoring, classes, or academic enrichment outside traditional school programs.	Children age 5+ with Down syndrome who need additional educational support.	Awards each semester: January, May, September. Summer Scholarships are open, applications will be accepted until Monday, April 6, 2026.
National Down Syndrome Society- Bright Future Fund.	Funding for post-secondary education, job training, or life-skills programs.	Adults 18+ with Down syndrome pursuing education or employment-related programs.	Application deadline: June 23, 2026.

Super Kids Tip:

For many Super Kids families, the most effective combination is:

FES-UA or another school scholarship + one targeted nonprofit grant + review of APD / SSI eligibility.

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📍 17121 NE 6t Ave, NMB, FL 33162.
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Section 1 - Florida State Scholarships

These programs are often the largest and most practical funding sources available to Florida families. They are administered through Step Up For Students and use the EMA platform for applications and fund management.

Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA)

Best fit: Florida families whose child has a qualifying disability, including autism spectrum disorder or Down syndrome, and who want flexible funds for therapies, curriculum, private school, evaluations, or approved educational services.

Main requirements: The student from age 3 through grade 12 or age 22. The child must **not be enrolled in a public school** and must have a **qualifying diagnosis**. Step Up materials list autism spectrum disorder and Down syndrome among eligible categories. Families should be ready to upload proof of age, Florida residency, and qualifying diagnosis. The **scholarship award amount** varies based on the **student's Matrix score/ESE level** (determined through the IEP) and **the grade level**. In **Miami-Dade and Broward counties**, the award ranges from **\$9,945 to \$35,973**.

How to apply: Create or log into an EMA account through Step Up For Students. Complete the application, upload required documents, review and sign the compliance statement, and submit through EMA.

Timing / due dates: For the 2026-27 cycle, applications opened **Feb. 1, 2026**. Renewal applications are **due Apr. 30, 2026**. New applications are accepted through Nov. 15, 2026. After award notice, families must accept or decline by the posted deadline in EMA.

Official link: <https://www.stepupforstudents.org/scholarships/unique-abilities/>

Super Kids note: This is usually the first program to review for Florida families with ASD or Down syndrome because it can unlock broader support than a single private grant.

Personalized Education Program (PEP)

Best fit: Families using a parent-directed education model who need scholarship dollars for curriculum, tutoring, instructional materials, or other approved educational expenses. PEP Scholarships provide access to an education savings account (ESA) that functions like a bank account

Main requirements: Child must generally be age 5 or older on or before Sept. 1, younger than 21, eligible for K-12 enrollment in a Florida public school, and a Florida resident unless a military exception applies. Second priority is extended to families with a household income of 400% of poverty or below. The **PEP award amount varies depending on the student's grade level**. For Miami-Dade and Broward counties, the award ranges from **\$7,831 to \$8,583**.

How to apply: Apply through EMA with Step Up For Students. Families create or log into EMA, complete the application, upload required documents, and accept the scholarship in EMA if awarded.

Timing / due dates: For 2026-27, both new and renewal PEP applications run **Feb. 1 through Apr. 30, 2026**. Some deadline exceptions may exist for active-duty military families and foster or out-of-home care situations.

Official link: <https://www.stepupforstudents.org/scholarships/personalized-education-program/>

Super Kids note: PEP is not disability-specific, but it can still help special-needs families who are using a customized home education model.



Section 2 - Autism Therapy and Treatment Grants

These grants are especially useful when insurance leaves a gap, a family is facing high copays, or a needed autism-related support is not fully covered.

Autism Hero Project - Medical Insurance Grant

Best fit: Florida families with a child who has autism and needs ABA support through insurance-related funding. This Grants cover medical insurance premiums ONLY. This grants do NOT cover deductibles, co-payments, co-insurance or any other out-of-pocket expenses. Applicants can be on MEDICAID, uninsured or have existing medical insurance and MUST be seeking Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapy.

Main requirements: Applicant must have a current autism diagnosis, be a Florida or Illinois resident, complete a personal statement, and be pursuing ABA therapy with a minimum of 12 hours weekly. The organization states that current-year tax return plus the two most recent pay stubs or unemployment pay stubs must be submitted. Household income and family size are considered.

How to apply: Complete the grant application on the Autism Hero Project website. Upload required financial documents and any requested supporting information. Send application questions or extra documents to applications@autismheroproject.org if needed.

Timing / due dates: Application cycle (for 2027 funding) is expected to open in Fall 2026, usually around **September-October 2026**.

Official link: <https://www.autismheroproject.org/application>

Super Kids note: This is one of the strongest targeted resources for families whose ABA access is limited by insurance structure, premiums, or cost sharing.

Autism Care Today (ACT Today) Grant

Best fit: Families seeking help with autism-related treatment, safety items, assistive technology, or other approved supports.

Main requirements: Income is considered, but ACT Today states there is no automatic disqualification strictly based on income. The organization reviews completeness of the application, household circumstances, requested amount, and supporting provider documentation or cost estimates. Proof of autism diagnosis and recommended treatment from your doctor or school Individualized Educational Program (IEP). Proof of cost for medical treatment, programs or materials. Proof of family income with a copy of your tax return or proof of any income (such as SSI, SDI, child support, etc).

How to apply: Apply through the ACT Today grant portal during an open cycle. Families should complete the full application, upload provider documentation for the requested service or item, and include tax information and family need information. ACT **award amount** is up to **\$5,000**.

Timing / due dates: ACT Today publishes quarterly windows. The standard quarterly schedule shown on the grant form page is **Jan. 1-31, Apr. 1-30, Jul. 1-31, and Oct. 1-31**, with notification dates listed by quarter. Verify the live portal before applying.

Official link: <https://www.act-today.org/apply-for-grant/>

Super Kids note: Helpful when a family needs a broader autism support grant rather than a strictly education-based award.



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Section 2 - Additional Autism Grants

MyGOAL Autism Grant

Best fit: Primary caregivers of individuals with autism who need help with medical, educational, enrichment, or personal needs not otherwise covered by school, insurance, or other funding sources.

Main requirements: MyGOAL states that applicants must be the primary caregiver and submit three core items: a physician-completed Medical Health Assessment Questionnaire, a caregiver cover letter describing household and financial situation, and the most current tax return or SSI notification. Recent recipients usually must wait three years before reapplying.

How to apply: Access the application portal from the MyGOAL website, prepare the three required documents in advance, and upload them directly to the online application before the deadline. The MyGOAL Autism Grant is **\$1,000**.

Timing / due dates: For the 2026 cycle, MyGOAL states that the portal opens **Feb. 2026**, and remains open until **Apr. 2026**. Recipients and non-recipients will be notified by July 2026.

Official link: <https://mygoalinc.org/mygoal-autism-grant-program/>

Super Kids note: This grant is parent-friendly and especially useful when the family needs flexible support outside a narrow insurance category.

National Autism Association - Give A Voice Program

Best fit: Families of autistic children or adults who are nonspeaking or unreliably speaking and need access to communication tools.

Main requirements: The iPad application indicates the individual must be age 5 or older, formally diagnosed with autism, and the application must be submitted by a parent or legal guardian and most recent tax Return. Families must have Wi-Fi, an Apple ID, and a current speech-language evaluation or recommendation.

How to apply: Download the correct application form from the National Autism Association website (iPad AAC or S2C/RPM pathway), complete the form carefully, and submit the required supporting documents exactly as directed on the application packet. Give A Voice provides a maximum grant award of **\$800**.

Timing / due dates: The program page states applications are being accepted; however, funding is limited. Families should apply as soon as documents are ready.

Official link: <https://nationalautismassociation.org/family-support/programs/naas-give-a-voice-program/>

Super Kids note: This can be especially meaningful for families whose biggest unmet need is communication access rather than tuition or general therapy.



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Section 2 - Medical and Special-Needs Grants

UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation (UHCCF)

Best fit: Families whose child has commercial health insurance but still faces out-of-pocket costs for health-related services, supplies, equipment, or therapies.

Main requirements: UHCCF is happy to consider children aged 3-6 for a one-time grant to help cover the cost of ABA therapy. They don't approve of grant funding for ABA therapy for children younger than 3 or older than 6. In addition, UHCCF states the child have a Social Security number, and have primary insurance through a commercial health plan. The foundation also publishes income limits by family size and requires documentation such as an explanation of benefits for requested services. Medicaid or CHIP may be secondary, but commercial insurance must be primary. The amount awarded to an individual within a 12-month period is limited to **\$5,000**. Awards to any one individual are limited to a lifetime maximum of **\$10,000**.

How to apply: Apply online through the UHCCF grant portal. Families should review the eligibility page first, gather tax return and insurance documentation, create the required account, and submit the application with all supporting materials.

Timing / due dates: Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. UHCCF notes that regional boards review completed applications regularly, so complete documentation matters.

Official link: <https://www.uhccf.org/apply-for-a-grant/>

Super Kids note: This is a strong option when a child has insurance but the family still cannot absorb the remaining cost.

Special Angels Foundation

Best fit: Families of children with special needs who need support for therapy, equipment, medical co-pays, or similar quality-of-life needs. This foundation is based in California, but out-of-state applications are accepted.

Main requirements: The foundation states the child must be under age 18, must be a U.S. citizen residing in the United States, and the request must include a letter of medical necessity from a physician, therapist, social worker, or IEP. The organization also asks for verification that other resources denied assistance.

How to apply: Use the foundation's grant application page, review the process instructions, and prepare the medical necessity letter plus any denial letters or supporting records requested. Award amounts vary depending on each applicant's individual case.

Timing / due dates: Grant availability depends on foundation cycles and available funds. Families should check the live application page before starting.

Official link: <https://specialangelsfoundation.org/apply-for-a-grant/>

Super Kids note: Although not Florida-specific, it is worth checking when therapy or adaptive equipment is the immediate need.



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Section 3 - Government Programs for Longer-Term Support

These programs are not quick grants, but they can be critically important for long-term support planning in Florida.

Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) / iBudget Waiver pathway

Best fit: Florida families seeking long-term disability services such as waiver-based support, behavior support, respite, or related developmental disability services.

Main requirements: APD states the applicant must generally be age 3 or older, live in Florida, and have a developmental disability that presented before age 18. APD identifies severe forms of autism and Down syndrome among qualifying categories. Families should be ready to provide identity verification, domicile verification, and diagnosis documentation, especially evaluations completed before age 18.

How to apply: Submit an application to the local APD office by mail, in person, or through the online route described by APD. Parents or legal guardians sign for minors. Families should keep copies of all documentation and follow up with the assigned region.

Timing / due dates: Application is available year-round. Because enrollment and waitlist movement can take time, families should apply as soon as eligibility seems possible.

Official link: <https://apd.myflorida.com/services/apply.htm>

Super Kids note: This is a planning move. Families should not wait until a child is older if they think APD may be relevant.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for children

Best fit: Families whose child has a qualifying disability and whose household income and resources may meet SSI rules.

Main requirements: SSA states a child may be eligible from birth until age 18 if the child has a medically determinable impairment causing marked and severe functional limitations expected to last at least 12 months or result in death. Financial eligibility rules also apply.

How to apply: Start the SSI application process online or call Social Security to schedule an appointment. Families should apply as soon as possible and be ready to provide medical and financial documents. SSA can help identify needed documents.

Timing / due dates: There is no fixed annual cycle. Apply as soon as possible because benefits cannot usually be paid for periods before the effective application date.

Official link: <https://www.ssa.gov/apply/ssi>

Super Kids note: SSI may also open the door to Medicaid-linked support depending on the family's situation.

Government Program Reminder

For some families, APD and SSI are worth exploring even if approval is not immediate. These programs are most helpful when parents are thinking beyond one grant cycle and need a longer-term support plan.



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Section 4 - Down Syndrome Resources

Families with Down syndrome may benefit from both general disability funding and programs offered by the Down Syndrome Foundation of Florida or national organizations.

Down Syndrome Foundation of Florida - ABA Scholarship Program

Best fit: Florida families of individuals with Down syndrome who need ABA support around specific behavior goals.

Main requirements: The program page states awards are given each semester and families are responsible for selecting an organization that must be pre-approved by the foundation. If an evaluation cost is needed before enrollment, families may contact the foundation for possible consideration.

How to apply: Identify the ABA provider or organization first, request any needed vendor approval from the foundation, and then use the application link provided on the scholarship page.

Timing / due dates: The page states awards are given each semester. Summer Scholarships are open, **applications will be accepted until Monday, April 6, 2026.**

Official link: <https://dsfflorida.org/aba-scholarship-program>

Super Kids note: This is a very relevant Florida-specific option for Down syndrome families who may also be addressing behavior or skill-building needs.

Down Syndrome Foundation of Florida - Educational Scholarship Program

Best fit: Families of children with Down syndrome who need short-term tutoring, classes, or outside academic support.

Main requirements: The page states the child must be age 5 or older and the family must already have identified the person or organization that will provide the service. Families must submit a summary of goals and benchmarks that will be used to measure progress.

How to apply: Review the scholarship page, identify the provider first, prepare the academic goal summary, and then apply using the posted application link.

Timing / due dates: The page states awards are given each semester in January, May, and September. Summer Scholarships are open, **applications will be accepted until Monday, April 6, 2026.**

Official link: <https://dsfflorida.org/educational-scholarships>

Super Kids note: Useful for targeted academic or enrichment support that falls outside a traditional school setting.



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Section 4 continued - National Down Syndrome Additional Support

National Down Syndrome Society - Bright Future Fund

Best fit: Adults with Down syndrome pursuing postsecondary education, job training, community classes, or life-skills enrichment.

Main requirements: NDSS states applicants must have Down syndrome, be age 18 or older, and show intent to enroll in a class or program that supports employment, independence, life skills, or meaningful enrichment.

How to apply: Follow the scholarship application instructions on the NDSS website, assemble the application package, and include all required materials such as forms, photos, and recommendation letters when the application is open.

Timing / due dates: The NDSS page notes the 2025 application closed and listed a June deadline for that cycle. Families should monitor the page for the next application release.

Official link: <https://ndss.org/ndss-scholarships/oneill-tabani-enrichment-fund>

Super Kids note: This is more relevant for older teens transitioning into adulthood or adults with Down syndrome.

Other Florida Support Organizations

- **CARD / University of Miami CARD:** autism navigation, training, and family support resources.
Official site: <https://umiamihealth.org/en/treatments-and-services/child-and-adolescent-psychiatry/center-for-autism-and-related-disabilities>
- **Autism Society of Florida:** advocacy, education, and community support.
Official site: <https://www.autismfl.org>
- **Family Network on Disabilities of Florida:** parent training and support.
Official site: <https://fndusa.org>
- **Florida Early Steps:** for children under age 3 with significant delays or conditions likely to result in delays.
Official site: <https://floridaearlysteps.com>



How Super Kids Can Guide Families Through Applications

Parents often feel overwhelmed not because funding does not exist, but because each program asks for documents in a different format and uses different timing rules. A simple internal workflow can make referrals much easier.

- Identify whether the family needs **school-related funding, therapy gap funding, equipment / communication support, or long-term disability support.**
- Check whether the family already has a recent diagnostic report, current insurance information, and tax return.
- Refer the family to the strongest 2 to 4 options first rather than sending a long unfocused list.
- Encourage families to apply early in the cycle and keep copies of every submission.

Recommended Super Kids Parent Workflow

Step 1: Screen for FES-UA eligibility.

Step 2: If insurance is a problem, review Autism Hero Project, UHCCF, and ACT Today.

Step 3: If communication is the major issue, review Give A Voice.

Step 4: If the child has Down syndrome, add the Down Syndrome Foundation of Florida options.

Step 5: For longer-term support, discuss APD and SSI.

Common Reasons Applications Get Delayed

- Old or incomplete diagnosis paperwork
- Missing financial documents
- No provider estimates or invoice attached
- Waiting until the last week of the cycle
- Using a non-parent contact email or inconsistent parent information across forms



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2026 Quick Timing Calendar

Program	Timing
FES-UA (Step Up Scholarship)	2026-27 applications opened Feb. 1, 2026 ; renewal due Apr. 30, 2026 ; new applications through Nov. 15, 2026.
PEP Scholarship	2026-27 applications opened Feb. 1, 2026 ; new and renewal applications due Apr. 30, 2026, unless a deadline exception applies.
MyGOAL Autism Grant	Portal listed as open Feb. 1, 2026, through Apr. 30, 2026 . Families should prepare required documents before applying.
ACT Today Grant	Quarterly application windows: Jan. 1–31, Apr. 1–30, Jul. 1–31, Oct. 1–31 . Check the live grant portal for confirmation.
Autism Hero Project	Annual grant cycle varies. Families should monitor the application page for the current open period.
UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation (UHCCF)	Rolling application; submit when documentation is complete.
National Autism Association – Give A Voice	Applications accepted while funding is available . Families should apply as soon as documents are prepared.
APD / iBudget Waiver (Florida)	No annual window . Families may apply year-round once eligibility documentation is ready.
SSI for Children	Year-round application through Social Security. Apply as soon as disability and financial eligibility criteria may be met.
Down Syndrome Foundation of Florida Scholarships	Award cycles typically occur January, May, and September each year.
NDSS Bright Future Fund	Previous cycle listed a June deadline . Families should monitor the page for the next application opening.

Best Reminder for SK Families

Do not wait for one program decision before preparing the next application. Families usually do best when they apply to several appropriate options in the same season.

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Official links directory

Resource	Official website
FES-UA	https://www.stepupforstudents.org/scholarships/unique-abilities/
PEP	https://www.stepupforstudents.org/scholarships/personalized-education-program/
Step Up scholarship portal	https://www.stepupforstudents.org/scholarships/logins/
Autism Hero Project	https://www.autismheroproject.org/application
ACT Today	https://www.act-today.org/apply-for-grant/
MyGOAL Autism Grant	https://mygoalinc.org/mygoal-autism-grant-program/
NAA Give A Voice	https://nationalautismassociation.org/family-support/programs/naas-give-a-voice-program/
UHCCF	https://www.uhccf.org/apply-for-a-grant/
Special Angels Foundation	https://specialangelsfoundation.org/apply-for-a-grant/
Different Needz Foundation	https://differentneedzfoundation.org/
Florida APD	https://apd.myflorida.com/services/apply.htm
SSI	https://www.ssa.gov/apply/ssi
DSF Florida ABA Scholarship	https://dsfflorida.org/aba-scholarship-program
DSF Florida Educational Scholarship	https://dsfflorida.org/educational-scholarships
NDSS Bright Future Fund	https://ndss.org/ndss-scholarships/oneill-tabani-enrichment-fund
Autism Society of Florida	https://www.autismfl.org/
Family Network on Disabilities	https://fndusa.org/