



When a child has special needs, finding childcare can become significantly more expensive than childcare costs for children without disabilities, as parents must look for individuals who are able to assist children who may be nonverbal, non-ambulatory or require additional help with feeding, toileting (past toddler years) and other activities. According to the [Economic Policy Institute](#), center-based child care for *typically-developing children* can range from between 11.7% to 33.7% of a family's total budget in a year. For perspective, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) established an affordability threshold for childcare at approximately 10% of a total family budget. In fact, in Washington, D.C. and 33 states, child care can cost more than the cost of in-state college tuition at a public 4-year university. Fortunately, some government programs exist that can help defray the cost of care for a child with special needs.

### Child Care for Children with HIE and other Disabilities



In many cases, households with children with disabilities can sometimes become one-earner households instead of two-earner households, as one parent often remains at home to care for the child with disabilities. In situations where this is not possible, child care is often one of the few options parents have to ensure their incomes can cover total family budgets.



It is important to note that child care centers are required to accommodate children with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Commonly, it is assumed that center-based programs aren't available to children with special needs. This is not the case. To find a credentialed care provider, refer to the following sources:

- The [Office of Child Care Technical Assistance](#) (CCTAN) is an information center that provides help and resources regarding child care center standards, child care center locations, and other useful information.
- The Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCR&R) provides referrals to agencies in most states that can help parents find and pay for childcare. Because these are state-level organizations, parents must search for these in their own individual state.

Programs that can help parents pay for childcare include:

- The [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families](#) (TANF) Program: This program allows a certain portion of funds to be paid directly to a care provider. Each state has different guidelines about who is eligible for the program, but generally program eligibility is based on measures relating to poverty-level incomes.
- The Child Care Subsidy Program: On a state-by-state and local basis, child care subsidies are available to parents of children who are either under the age of 13 or who have disabilities and are under 19 years of age. Because these are administered on a local level, the program requirements and eligibility can vary widely at the discretion of agencies that oversee the program. Generally, parents must meet low-income eligibility requirements and be working or attending classes at least 20 hours per week. They also must be able to provide certain documents such as tax forms, pay stubs, proof of address, birth certificates and medical/immunization records. It should be noted that these programs *will not* usually cover the full cost of care, only assist with paying a portion of it. Periodic reapplications may be necessary. In limited circumstances, these subsidies can help pay for in-home child care by either an immediate family member or a non-related individual.
- Individual state Health and Human Service Departments generally maintain a list of nonprofit agencies that can provide child care services at a reduced cost.



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## Related Resources

- [Disability Cost Guide](#)