

Your baby is home...now what do you do?

Congratulations on your new baby. Being home with your new baby is wonderful, but it can also feel a bit overwhelming. It is hard to know what needs to be done right away and what can wait.

- *Take the time to get to know your baby and settle in as a family.*
- *Certain things, listed below, are best done early so you can get your baby the services or benefits he/she deserves.*
- *When you are ready to get more involved there are many ways to do it.*

Things to Do Sooner Than Later

A Primary Care Provider (PCP): Your primary care provider will be a key partner in the care of your child. The PCP will see your child frequently during the first year of life and at least every 6 months thereafter. The PCP will get to know your baby well and will guide you to useful resources and supports.

Early Intervention (EI): EI provides comprehensive developmental services to children with special needs in the comfort of their home. Some hospitals automatically send referrals to the Early Intervention Center in the baby's area. Call the EI program in your area, if you haven't been told that the hospital has already done so. You can call the EI main number, 1-800-905-8437, and ask them for the center that serves your city/town, or look for the EI program in your city by using the Family Ties website www.massfamilyties.org.

A good book can be a very helpful resource: We recommend: **Babies with Down Syndrome – A New Parents' Guide.** Edited by Karen Stray-Gundersen. The Special Needs Collection. Woodbine House 1995.

Mass Health: You may want to consider applying for Mass Health. This can be helpful to have as a backup to your private health insurance or as your child's primary insurance. You can get the application online or by calling for one. 1-800-841-2900 or www.state.ma.us/dma.

Supplemental Security Income, SSI: A federal program that provides monthly cash benefits and automatic Mass Health coverage for children with special needs of low or moderate income. You can call them and find out the nearest location near you. You may also be able to find out their income guidelines before even applying at 1-800-882-1435.

Additional Supports and Resources

The Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress MDSC: Offers many resources including new parent information, tips for navigating developmental services, conferences, links to excellent resources, articles, and updates for parents and professionals. MDSC offers a **First Call Program for new parents**, a state-wide volunteer network of trained parents of a child with DS who make themselves available to new parents as a knowledgeable resource. A "First Call" Packet is delivered to each new family, which includes complimentary books on DS. 1-800-664-6372 www.mdsc.org

ARC The ARC offers information, services, stipends, groups, sibling support, and general support for the children with disabilities and their families. Call 1-781-891-6270 or go to www.arcmass.org to find out more information about services in your area.

Developmental Disabilities Services, formerly known as DMR: Provides flexible funding, respite, and many other supports to families. There are many community-based agencies. Call 1-888-367-4435 to find the agency nearest to you.

National Down Syndrome Congress: NDSC provides a wealth of information, support and opportunities to meet other parents. They provide excellent packets of information for new parents. 1-800-232-NDSC www.ndscenter.org

Children's Hospital Down Syndrome Program: This program offers many specialized services for families and children with Down Syndrome. For more information call 857-218-4329.