



PROVINCIAL PRESCHOOL AUTISM SERVICE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Single Entry Point Now Available for Nova Scotia's Preschool Autism Services

October 22, 2025



Families of preschool-age children with autism will have access to a Clinical Intake and Care Coordination service – a single point of contact to help them navigate the supports and services they need before, during, and after their child's autism diagnosis. Below are FAQs to support professionals and families to navigate these new changes.

GENERAL FAQs

1. What is PPAS Clinical Intake and Care Coordination?

Led by IWK Health, the Provincial Preschool Autism Service Clinical Intake and Care Coordination Service is a single point of contact for preschool autism services offered by all Provincial Preschool Autism Service partners – Autism Nova Scotia, Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Health, and IWK Health – for families seeking autism-specific services and supports for their pre-school aged child, including autism assessment.

By calling a single phone number, 1-833-200-7817, families can speak with someone who will listen, learn about their child's needs and family's priorities, and guide them to the available services and supports based on eligibility criteria for services.

2. Who is this service for?

This service is only available for preschool-age children who need autism-specific services and supports who have not yet begun Grade Primary. Talk to your health care provider or school team to determine what supports are available for children who've already started Primary.

3. What is changing as of October 2025?

One contact: There will be a single phone/email for preschool autism services for families across Nova Scotia, eliminating the need to contact separate organizations and navigate different referral forms/processes and eligibility criteria.

Personalized navigation: Through IWK Health, a Resource Coordinator with the PPAS Clinical Intake and Care Coordination service will connect families to services and community resources based on their child's age and stage (before, during, or after diagnosis).

Single referral hub: There is now a single point of contact to send all referrals for both diagnostic and intervention services for all preschool-age children in Nova Scotia up until Grade Primary through PPAS at IWK Health. This includes all [PPAS services](#), such as QuickStart Nova Scotia, Communication Services through Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia, autism diagnostic assessments, and other autism intervention services

offered by IWK Health.

These changes will consolidate the separate intake and referral processes for autism assessment and intervention services at IWK Health, Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia, Autism Nova Scotia, and Nova Scotia Health into a single, united referral hub for the province. IWK Health will work closely with Autism Nova Scotia, Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia, and Nova Scotia Health to connect children to autism-specific services depending on their needs and family's priorities.

4. Why are these changes being made?

We've heard from many families that connecting to resources and support can be challenging. Through the Provincial Preschool Autism Service (PPAS)'s Clinical Intake and Care Coordination service, our goal is to reduce the burden on caregivers by providing one point of contact, guidance and support for each family, and navigation to the supports available at each step of a child's journey. The goal is to be family-centered and efficient, streamlining the process for families and referring professionals.

5. What services are available through PPAS? Can Clinical Intake connect families to all of them?

Please see [our handout](#) for a list of all services available through PPAS. Yes – PPAS Clinical Intake and Care Coordination connects families to all PPAS services listed in the handout.

6. Will this help access to services?

There are no changes in service access/availability as part of this change. While we are simplifying the process to navigate services, there continues to be wait-times for all PPAS services. These wait times vary depending on the service. Some services are available for younger children and some PPAS services are available only for children with a confirmed/provisional diagnosis. Some services are offered by oldest date of birth as services become available in communities. For more information about PPAS services and supports available, please see [our handout](#).

7. Are all autism services now being delivered by IWK?

No. The Provincial Preschool Autism Service is a *partnership* between IWK Health, Nova Scotia Health, Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia, and Autism Nova Scotia. IWK Health, through the PPAS Clinical Intake and Care Coordination team, is managing the referral process only. All services and assessments will continue to be provided by health care professionals at all PPAS partner organizations, province wide. [Refer to the PPAS handout](#) to see which PPAS services are provided by each of the partner organizations.

FAQs FOR FAMILIES

8. How can families reach PPAS?

Families can <i>self-refer</i> to PPAS by calling or emailing. Phones are monitored from Monday through Friday, between 8:30am – 4:30pm (excluding weekends and holidays).	
Phone (toll free):	1-833-200-7817
Email:	intake-preschoolautism@iwk.nshealth.ca

9. Can families self-refer to services? What about for assessments?

Yes. Any family can call the PPAS Clinical Intake and Care Coordination team to get advice and support for next steps. Some services are only available for children with a confirmed/provisional diagnosis of autism and the Clinical Intake team will share what services are available for self-referral when families speak with them.

If families are looking for an autism assessment for their child, we encourage families to work with community referral partners as the preferred way to get connected. If families choose to self-refer, they can contact us by phone or email, and team members will assist with the next steps.

10. When is the service open?

Phone and email will be monitored Monday through Friday, from 8:30am – 4:30pm (excluding weekends and holidays). Calls/emails received outside of these hours will receive a callback or response during working hours. There is an option to leave a message and request a call back.

11. What can families expect at their PPAS Intake call?

If a child does not already have a confirmed diagnosis of autism, a screening will be completed to ensure that PPAS is the right place for them to get connected to supports, including to get on the autism diagnostic assessment waitlist, and to receive information about the services and supports available to them given their age and eligibility for services.

If a child does have a confirmed (or provisional) diagnosis of autism, clinical intake will focus on learning about the child's strengths, needs, and the family's priorities, and then connect them to the PPAS services and supports that best fit their needs.

12. If families are on the wait list for either an autism assessment or for intervention services can they call PPAS?

Families can now contact PPAS for general questions or navigation support while waiting for intervention services or an assessment. This may include help getting connected to autism education resources, such as the [Autism Education Series](#), as well as [community programs](#) and supports.

13. Are PPAS Clinical Intake and Care Coordination services available in French?

Yes. When families call PPAS, there will be a menu option for families to identify if they would like to speak to someone in French.

14. Are there specific supports available for Mi'kmaw / Indigenous families?

Yes. Families have the option to get connected with a Mi'kmaw/Indigenous Resource Coordinator. Families can request this support when they reach out to Clinical Intake.

15. What about a child who's new to Nova Scotia, has an autism assessment already completed (i.e., out of province or out of country assessment), and needs to get connected to services?

The family can call PPAS Clinical Intake at 1-833-200-7817 and provide a copy of their diagnostic report to get connected to services.

16. What if children are not eligible for PPAS services?

If a family contacts PPAS Clinical Intake and they are not eligible for autism-specific services at this time, they will be provided with information about other supports available in the early years and will be encouraged to reach out to their health care team. If additional information or concerns arise in the future before starting Primary, the child can be re-referred to PPAS at that time

FAQs FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

17. How does a health professional/community partner make a referral for supports/services for a preschool age child and their family?

[Use the PPAS Intake Request Form](#). The PPAS Intake Request Form is used for all services offered by PPAS.
[Refer to the PPAS handout](#)

- Foundational Education
- QuickStart Nova Scotia provided by Autism Nova Scotia (children 12-31 months at program start; confirmed, provisional, or suspected autism.
- Communication Services provided by Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (for children with a confirmed autism diagnosis, if not confirmed, refer to Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia directly
- ESDM-Informed Service
- Focused Intervention
- Intensive Service

Email the referral to referrals-preschoolautism@iwb.nshealth.ca or fax to 902-428-9931

18. How does a health professional/community partner make a referral for an autism diagnostic assessment for a preschool age child?

Please use the [Autism Diagnostic Assessment Referral Form](#). Email the referral to [referrals-](#)

preschoolautism@iwk.nshealth.ca or fax to 902-428-9931.

If you are submitting the Autism Diagnostic Assessment Referral Form, the child will also be considered for supports and services. You do not need to also send a PPAS Intake Request Form.

19. Will health professionals/community partners get confirmation that their referral has been received by PPAS?

Yes. Confirmation of receipt by the Clinical Intake and Care Coordination Team will be provided to the referral source via email when the referral is processed.

20. Will families get confirmation that a health professional/community partner has submitted a referral for them?

Yes. PPAS Clinical Intake and Care Coordination will reach out to all families to confirm their referral was received and to provide information about available services and supports based on their eligibility.

21. Do I need to contact Nova Scotia Health for autism assessments for children who reside in Northern, Eastern, and Western Zones?

No. Referrals for autism assessment for children who reside in Northern, Eastern and Western zones that previously would have gone through Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addictions Program intake process can be sent directly to PPAS Clinical Intake.

Assessments will continue to be provided by health care professionals at both Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health and families will continue to have access points for assessments in all four health zones.

22. Can families self-refer to services?

Yes, if families choose to self-refer, they can contact the PPAS Clinical Intake and Care Coordination team by phone or email, and team members will assist with the next steps.

23. What if children are not eligible for PPAS services?

If a family contacts PPAS Clinical Intake and they are not eligible for autism-specific services at this time, they will be provided with information about other supports available in the early years and will be encouraged to reach out to their health care team. If additional information or concerns arise in the future, the child can be re-referred to PPAS at that time.

24. How do Health Professionals/Community Partners send referrals for QuickStart Nova Scotia now?

Referrals to QuickStart Nova Scotia for children between 12-31 months at the start of the program with a confirmed, provisional or suspected autism diagnosis can be sent directly to PPAS Clinical Intake using either referral form.

- [Autism Diagnostic Assessment Referral Form](#)

- [PPAS Intake Request Form](#)

25. Will this change affect a child's access to QuickStart NS?

No, access to QuickStart NS will not be impacted. The integration is designed to simplify the referral process and ensure families receive timely support through a single point of contact. There will be no delays and children already referred to QuickStart Nova Scotia using the previous referral form and children do not need to be re-referred.

26. How do health professionals/community partners connect families to Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia?

Referrals to Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia for autism-specific services for children with a confirmed/provisional diagnosis of autism can be sent directly to PPAS Clinical Intake using either referral form

- [Autism Diagnostic Assessment Referral Form](#)
- [PPAS Intake Request Form](#)

For children who do not yet have a confirmed diagnosis of autism, referrals can be sent to [Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia directly here](#) or the general phone number: (902) 492-8289.

27. Will health professionals/community partners need to submit a new referral for a child if they already submitted one to any of the PPAS services?

No. All existing referrals are being processed by each service. These changes take effect for new referrals going forward as of October 22, 2025 only.

28. What happens if referrals are still sent directly to partner organizations (instead of PPAS Clinical Intake) after this new process goes live in October 2025?

Processes are being set up with all PPAS partners at Autism Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Health, and Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia to ensure referrals get redirected to PPAS if they happen to go to former email/fax/phone lines. Referral sources may receive a communication to acknowledge their referral was forwarded to PPAS and remind them of the new process for future referrals.

29. Can health professionals/community partners speak to someone if they have questions about a referral they sent in?

Yes. Health professionals and community partners can contact PPAS about referrals you've submitted by emailing referrals-preschoolautism@iwk.nshealth.ca or calling our main line at 1-833-200-7817.

30. How does a health professional/community partner make a referral for an autism diagnostic assessment for a school age child/youth (already in Grade Primary or above)?

Referrals are required from a professional who knows the child (e.g., a teacher, a doctor, a nurse practitioner, or a speech-language pathologist and other health professionals). Use the [Autism Diagnostic Assessment Referral Form](#), and email the referral at, SchoolAgeAutism.Referral@iwk.nshealth.ca or Fax: (902) 428-9816.