

A FREE GUIDE FOR NORTH CAROLINA FAMILIES

The Back to School Checklist

Age by age, from the first drop off to the first job

Five age groups, each with its own page. Use the one that fits your child, and add your own items where we left room. The middle section is built to be filled in and handed straight to a teacher, a substitute, or an incoming care provider.

Written for caregivers of children and young adults with autism, by the clinical and care teams at iCare Therapy.

What is inside

● Five age groups

Under 5, 5 to 8, 9 to 12, 13 to 17, and Young Adult 18 plus.
Each one gets its own checklist.

● A pack you give away

A fill-in profile for teachers, substitutes and new providers,
plus an update sheet for mid year.

● Where we come to you

The service area map and all thirty two zip codes across
three North Carolina counties.

● Everything we offer

Our services, how insurance works, and how to reach a
care coordinator.

Fillable on screen. Check the boxes, type your notes, save the file, print it if you want.

Tell us about your family

Or call (800) 264-1985. A care coordinator
will listen first and answer your questions
about ABA therapy. No pressure, no commitment.

TALK TO US

(800) 264-1985

Hello@iCareTherapy.com | iCareTherapy.com

Tell us about your family

What is in here, and where to find it

Every line below is a link. Tap or click one and it jumps straight to that page. On a printed copy, the page numbers are on the right.

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Read this part, then use it however you want

A checklist can turn into one more thing you are failing at, which is the opposite of the point. So here is the honest framing. Nothing on the following pages is required. Nothing here is a treatment plan and nothing here replaces guidance from your child's clinical team. This is a set of things that tend to matter in August and September, sorted by age, written by people who spend their working days in family homes during exactly this season.

If you already have a routine that works

Skip to the age page, read the three columns, and steal only the items you are not already doing. Then close the file. Two new items is a good year.

If this is your first school year after a diagnosis

Start at the age page and work down the left column first. Before the first day carries most of the weight. The other two columns can wait until the week of.

If last year went badly

Read the Tell the teacher or Tell the school column first, because that is usually where the gap was. Then write the specific thing that went wrong on the notes page and bring it to your care team.

A note about the pages you will want to ignore

Some items below will not fit your child and a few may be actively wrong for them. Sensory needs, communication style, and what a hard moment looks like all vary enormously, and a printable page cannot know your child. Where an item does not fit, cross it out. Where you have a better version, there is a write in line at the bottom of every column. If you are unsure whether something belongs in your child's plan, that is a good question for a Board Certified Behavior Analyst rather than a checklist.

Questions while you work through it?

Call (800) 264-1985, email Hello@iCareTherapy.com, or use the button below.

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NORTH CAROLINA

General information, not legal advice

Know your North Carolina school options

What the state requires, and where to check it yourself

Families often plan a whole school year around an assumption about what is required. Before you do that, it is worth knowing what North Carolina actually says. What follows is general information with the source next to it. It is not legal advice, and iCare Therapy does not recommend one schooling option over another. That decision belongs to your family.

What the law says about age

- **Compulsory attendance covers ages seven and up**

North Carolina law requires a parent, guardian or custodian to send a child between the ages of seven and 16 to school. General Statute 115C-378(a).

- **Kindergarten age alone does not trigger it**

A child under seven is not required to attend simply because they have reached kindergarten age.

- **Enrolling early does start the clock**

A child under seven who is enrolled in a public school in kindergarten through grade two must attend while enrolled, unless the child is withdrawn. Same statute.

WORTH KNOWING

One thing to be aware of: state sources word the upper age slightly differently. The statute reads between seven and 16, while the Division of Non-Public Education describes it as 7 through 15. Confirm your own child's situation with the school or the Division rather than relying on a summary.

The options families choose from

iCare Therapy does not recommend one over another

Public school

Your assigned school, or another public option your district offers.

Public virtual or remote

Where a district or the state runs an online program.

Private school

Physical private schools in NC register with the Division.

Home school

A non-public school of no more than two families.

If you are looking at home school or an online program

- Home schools file a Notice of Intent with the Division of Non-Public Education before they begin.
- Registered home schools keep attendance records and administer an annual standardized test.
- Online private schools are not registered by the Division. If you use one, the Division recommends you also file a Notice of Intent to operate a home school.
- State law lets a registered home school use tutors, group instruction, and outside experts.

CHECK IT DIRECTLY WITH NORTH CAROLINA

- [NC Division of Non-Public Education, Home Schools](#)
- [NC General Statute 115C-378, Compulsory Attendance](#)

Division of Non-Public Education: 984-236-0110

Checked against these sources in August 2026. Confirm before you act.

HOW THIS AFFECTS THERAPY

Whichever way you go, our care is delivered in the home. A change in schooling does not mean rebuilding the therapy around it.

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UNDER 5

Back to School Checklist · iCare Therapy

Preschool, pre-K, and the first real goodbye

At this age the school year is mostly about separation and sequence. Your child does not need to understand the whole day. They need to know that you leave, and then you come back, and that the middle part is survivable. Everything below is built around making the day predictable rather than making it easy.

Before the first day

- ☐ Practice the drop off for real. Walk to the door, say your goodbye line, leave, come back.
- ☐ Take a photo of the classroom door and look at it together at home.
- ☐ Move bedtime earlier in small steps instead of all at once.
- ☐ Pack the comfort item they already use. A new one will not work on a hard day.
- ☐ Practice opening the lunch container at home, at a table, with nobody helping.
- ☐ Label everything, including the item they will not share.

Yours:

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

The first week

- ☐ Keep the goodbye short and word for word identical every morning.
- ☐ Expect the hard part to land at home, not at school. That is normal.
- ☐ Protect the hour after pickup. No errands, no questions, no debrief.
- ☐ Send the same lunch every day if that is the lunch that gets eaten.

Yours:

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Tell the teacher

- ☐ One sentence on how your child asks for help.
- ☐ One sentence on what a hard moment looks like before it gets loud.
- ☐ What the comfort item is for.
- ☐ Who may pick up, and what your child calls that person.

Yours:

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

THE HOUR AFTER PICKUP

- ☐ Same snack, same spot, same nothing.

- ☐ No questions about the day for the first half hour.

Worth protecting, even in a good week

- ☐ Falling apart at home is the day landing, not failing.

PARENT TIP

Familiar tools work. New tools in a hard moment do not. If you are choosing between the worn out backpack and the nice new one, send the worn out one.

HOW ICARE THERAPY HELPS

Our clinicians work in the home, where drop off practice, the morning sequence, and the after school hour actually happen. Mornings can be a written goal.

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AGES 5 TO 8

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Kindergarten through second grade

This is the stretch where the day gets long and the rules get real. Cafeterias are loud, bathrooms are public, and holding it together for six hours costs something. Most of what you are managing is not the school day itself. It is the bill that comes due at four o'clock.

Before the first day

- ☐ Drive the route or ride the bus route once, at the actual time of day.
- ☐ Practice the school bathroom problem at home. Loud flush, no lock, other people waiting.
- ☐ Open every single thing you plan to pack. Every zipper, every lid, every wrapper.
- ☐ Set clothes out the night before and offer two choices, not ten.
- ☐ Carry a tray at home. Balance is a skill and the cafeteria is not the place to learn it.
- ☐ Write their name inside the backpack, not only on the outside.

Yours:

☐ _____
☐ _____

The first week

- ☐ Ask one specific question instead of how was your day. Try who did you sit with.
- ☐ Keep the after school snack identical for the first stretch.
- ☐ Watch for the crash near the end of the week. Four days of holding on adds up.
- ☐ Let homework wait until after the reset, not before it.

Yours:

☐ _____
☐ _____

Tell the teacher

- ☐ The break signal your child already uses at home.
- ☐ The sound or the smell that sets things off.
- ☐ What your child does in the sixty seconds before a hard moment.
- ☐ Whether a fire drill needs a heads up.

Yours:

☐ _____
☐ _____

THE HOUR AFTER PICKUP

- ☐ Snack before conversation. Every time.
- ☐ One quiet thing before any homework.
- ☐ Ask about one moment, not the whole day.

Worth protecting, even in a good week

PARENT TIP

Two rules for what goes in the bag. Nothing new, and nothing bigger than a side pocket. Then tell the teacher what each item is for, so it does not get confiscated on day two.

HOW ICARE THERAPY HELPS

Caregiver Training exists for the four o'clock hour. You get the same strategies your clinician uses, so the plan holds when nobody from iCare Therapy is there.

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AGES 9 TO 12

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Upper elementary and the move to middle school

Somewhere in here the building gets bigger, the schedule splits into periods, and the social stakes go up fast. Your child is also starting to notice how they compare to everyone else, which is its own kind of tiring. Plan for the logistics and the noticing at the same time.

Before the first day

- ☐ Walk the building if the school allows it. Find the bathroom, the office, and the exit.
- ☐ Practice the locker until it is boring. Boring is the goal.
- ☐ Pick one landing spot at home for the backpack. Same spot, every day.
- ☐ Talk through what to do when a plan changes mid day, because it will.
- ☐ Agree on a check in signal that does not look like a check in signal.

Yours:

☐ _____
☐ _____

The first week

- ☐ Let them tell you nothing on day one. Ask again on day three.
- ☐ Watch the sleep. This is the age where late nights start quietly.
- ☐ Keep one after school activity, not four.
- ☐ Find out which part of the day is hardest, then build around that part.

Yours:

☐ _____
☐ _____

Tell the school

- ☐ How your child asks for help, including whether they will refuse to ask out loud.
- ☐ What group work costs them.
- ☐ Which support they actually use, not only the one written down somewhere.
- ☐ Who to call first, and what you would rather hear about right away.

Yours:

☐ _____
☐ _____

THE LANDING HOUR

- ☐ Let them go quiet without making it a problem.

- ☐ Food first, then whatever they need, then the rest.

Worth protecting, even in a good week

- ☐ Save hard conversations for a night that is not a school night.

PARENT TIP

If your child has a support plan, read it before the first week and check that it matches the child you have now, not the one you had two years ago. Plans age faster than kids do.

HOW ICARE THERAPY HELPS

Self advocacy and handling a plan that changes are common goals here. Your Board Certified Behavior Analyst can write both into the plan.

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AGES 13 TO 17

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Middle and high school

Your job changes here. You are moving from running the system to backing up the system, and your teen has opinions about the pace of that handoff. Give away one real piece of the process before the year starts, not after something goes wrong.

Before the first day

- ☐ Hand over one piece for real. The alarm, the packing, or the schedule. Their call which.
- ☐ Agree on the text that means are you okay without saying are you okay.
- ☐ Read the schedule together and find the transition that will be hardest.
- ☐ Settle the phone rules before day one, not after the first problem.
- ☐ Build the plan for the day the ride does not show up.

Yours:

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

The first week

- ☐ Do not ask about the day in the car. Ask an hour later.
- ☐ Learn the difference between a flat mood and plain exhaustion.
- ☐ Protect one evening with nothing on it.
- ☐ Notice which names come up. Names are useful information.

Yours:

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Tell the school

- ☐ How your teen signals that they need to leave a room.
- ☐ Whether they will speak up for themselves or go quiet and absorb it.
- ☐ Who to contact first and by which method.
- ☐ What you want looped in on immediately versus at the end of the week.

Yours:

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

THE LANDING HOUR

- ☐ Do not open with questions. Open with food.

- ☐ Note the days they come home flat. Patterns show up fast.

Worth protecting, even in a good week

- ☐ Keep dinner boring and predictable the first week.

PARENT TIP

Ask your teen which of these items they want you handling and which they want handled by them. Then respect the answer for at least a month before you renegotiate.

HOW ICARE THERAPY HELPS

Schedules slip. Care does not have to. When in person will not work, Telehealth ABA is available for some care recipients depending on need and coverage.

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YOUNG ADULT 18+

Back to School Checklist · iCare Therapy

Transition, coursework, and work

The structure that carried the last twelve years is gone and nothing automatically replaces it. The task now is building a scaffold your young adult chooses to keep, which means most of these items are conversations rather than tasks. Legal footing changes at eighteen too, and that is worth sorting before it becomes urgent.

Before the term or the job starts

- ☐ Write down who handles what. Actually write it down.
- ☐ Practice the commute at the real time of day, with the real transfers.
- ☐ Start any accommodation request early rather than in week three.
- ☐ Build the backup for a canceled ride or a shifted shift.
- ☐ Talk about what disclosure looks like, and be clear it is their decision.

Yours:

☐ _____
☐ _____

The first weeks

- ☐ Check in on a schedule you both agreed to, not whenever you get worried.
- ☐ Watch the third week. The first two run on adrenaline and then it runs out.
- ☐ Keep one standing thing that has nothing to do with school or work.
- ☐ Track what is getting skipped. What gets skipped first tells you what is hardest.

Yours:

☐ _____
☐ _____

Worth sorting now

- ☐ Who is permitted to discuss their care with a provider once they turn eighteen.
- ☐ What they want you to know and what they want kept private.
- ☐ Where ABA goals fit if therapy is continuing.
- ☐ Which supports follow them and which ones stopped at graduation.

Yours:

☐ _____
☐ _____

THE RESET

- ☐ Build a real break between the day and the evening.

- ☐ Protect one thing that belongs only to them.

Worth protecting, even in a good week

- ☐ Watch what gets dropped first when the week gets heavy.

PARENT TIP

Independence is not a switch. Pick the two things they will own completely this term and let the rest stay shared until those two are steady.

HOW ICARE THERAPY HELPS

iCare Therapy works with young adults, not only young children. If the transition has surfaced new goals, a care coordinator can walk through restarting.

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GIVE THIS PART AWAY

You have been handed this sheet

For teachers, school leaders, substitutes, and incoming care providers

Somebody gave you the next few pages because they would rather you knew this in week one than found it out in week six. A caregiver wrote it, not a clinician. It is not a medical record, not a diagnosis, and not a treatment plan. It is one family telling you what they already know works, so you do not have to learn it the hard way and neither does the child.

What this is

- One caregiver's working knowledge, written in plain language.
- The things that usually take a full term to figure out.
- Specific and practical. Not a personality summary.
- Meant to be updated. Ask for a fresh copy after a long break.

What this is not

- Not an IEP, a 504 plan, or any formal accommodation.
- Not a clinical assessment and not advice from a provider.
- Not a medical record. Health details belong on the school health form.
- Not confidential to iCare Therapy. The family chose to share it.

IF THIS CONFLICTS WITH A FORMAL PLAN

If anything here conflicts with a formal plan, the formal plan wins. This sheet informs the plan, it never replaces it. If you think a child needs a formal evaluation or a written plan, say so to the family and start that process. Do not use this sheet instead of one.

Your first week, if you only do four things

- ☐ Read the safety block first. It is the one with real consequences.
- ☐ Pick two things to actually do. Nobody executes eleven new things at once.
- ☐ Tell the caregiver which two you picked, so they can back you up at home.
- ☐ Ask for the What Changed page after any long break.

There is deliberately no medication section. Medication and medical detail belong on the school health form and go through the school nurse, not a page that gets photocopied and left in a folder.

If you are an incoming Registered Behavior Technician, respite worker, or care provider, treat this as caregiver report rather than clinical data. It tells you what the family has already tried. Confirm anything clinical with the supervising Board Certified Behavior Analyst.

WHO TO CONTACT ABOUT THIS CHILD

Filled in by the caregiver. This is who to call before you change anything.

CAREGIVER NAME

BEST NUMBER

BEST WAY AND TIME TO REACH THEM

SECOND CONTACT

WORK WITH OTHER FAMILIES WHO MIGHT NEED THIS?

iCare Therapy provides in-home and virtual ABA therapy across Mecklenburg, Iredell and Gaston counties. A care coordinator can walk through referrals and insurance.

Get in touch

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PAGE 1 OF 2 · FILL IN AND HAND OVER

Written by a caregiver. Not a clinical document.

About this child

The part people usually learn too slowly

CHILD'S NAME

WHAT THEY GO BY

AGE

GRADE OR SETTING

Start here. What is good about them.

For example: Knows every county in North Carolina and will tell you all of them. Dry sense of humor that adults miss. First one to help a younger kid. Reads well above grade level.

How they communicate

For example: Four or five word sentences when calm, single words when stressed. Uses a speech device, so give her time and do not finish her sentence. Says he is fine when he is not, so watch his hands instead. Will not ask for help out loud, will stand near your desk and wait.

What already works. Do not replace these.

For example: Noise cancelling headphones in the cafeteria and the gym, and they are not a toy or a reward. A chew necklace that goes back on after lunch. One warning before a transition, then a second at two minutes. A break card he hands you, and he goes, no questions.

What a hard moment looks like before it gets loud

For example: Goes quiet and stops looking at you about a minute out. Starts humming one note and it gets louder. Pulls his hood up and puts his head down. Asks the same question over and over, which is checking, not defiance. Bounces a leg fast under the desk.

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PAGE 2 OF 2 · FILL IN AND HAND OVER

Written by a caregiver. Not a clinical document.

What helps, what to avoid, and safety

The second half of the same conversation

What helps them come back

For example: Fewer words. One instruction, then wait ten full seconds. Let him leave the room and he returns on his own in about five minutes. Dim light, no talking, hand her the fidget. Do not ask what is wrong until she is regulated, because she cannot answer during.

What does not help. Please avoid these.

For example: Do not touch her to redirect, even a hand on the shoulder. Do not raise your voice, it does not speed anything up. Do not offer choices mid moment, it is too much input. Do not make him apologize in front of the class. Do not take the headphones away as a consequence. Do not count down out loud.

Sensory. Sound, light, touch, smell, movement.

For example: Fire alarms, hand dryers, chairs scraping, the cafeteria at full capacity. Fluorescent flicker, so he does better near the window. Tags in clothing, and unexpected touch from behind. Cleaning spray. Needs to move every twenty minutes, and a job like carrying a note works.

Food, and the parts of the day that are hard

For example: Same lunch every day, please do not encourage him to try something else. Will not eat if foods touch. Schedule changes need a heads up in the morning, not in the moment. Substitutes are hard, so tell the family the night before if you can. Warn us that a fire drill is coming, even without a date.

Safety. Read this one twice.

For example: He may leave the room or the building without warning when overwhelmed. That is escape from noise, not running away, and doors need watching. Drawn to water, and the retention pond behind the field is a risk. No traffic awareness in the parking lot. Does not answer to his name when dysregulated, so do not assume he is ignoring you.

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THE UPDATE SHEET

Date completed: _____

What changed

For someone who already knows this child

Hand this one to a teacher or a provider who has already read the profile. Long breaks change children, and the things that worked in October are not always the things that work in February. Fill it in after a school holiday, after a move, after any change at home, or whenever somebody new joins the team.

New since we last talked

New words, new skills, something they can do now that they could not before, a new interest worth using.

What stopped working

A strategy that used to help and now sets things off. A tool they have outgrown or started refusing.

What we are working on right now

The current goals, in plain language. What you could reinforce without running a program.

What changed at home

A new sibling, a move, a schedule change, a loss, a different bedtime. Say only what you are comfortable sharing.

Please stop doing this one thing

The single change that would help most this month.

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Notes and questions for your care team

Bring this page to your next session. Specific beats general every time. Your Board Certified Behavior Analyst can turn a concrete observation into a goal, and cannot do much with the school year is hard.

What went well this week

What did not, and what happened right before it

What changed at home

Questions for my Board Certified Behavior Analyst

This page is not a clinical record. Share only what you want to share.

Want a clinician looking at this with you?

Call (800) 264-1985 or tell us about your family and a care coordinator will follow up.

Get in touch

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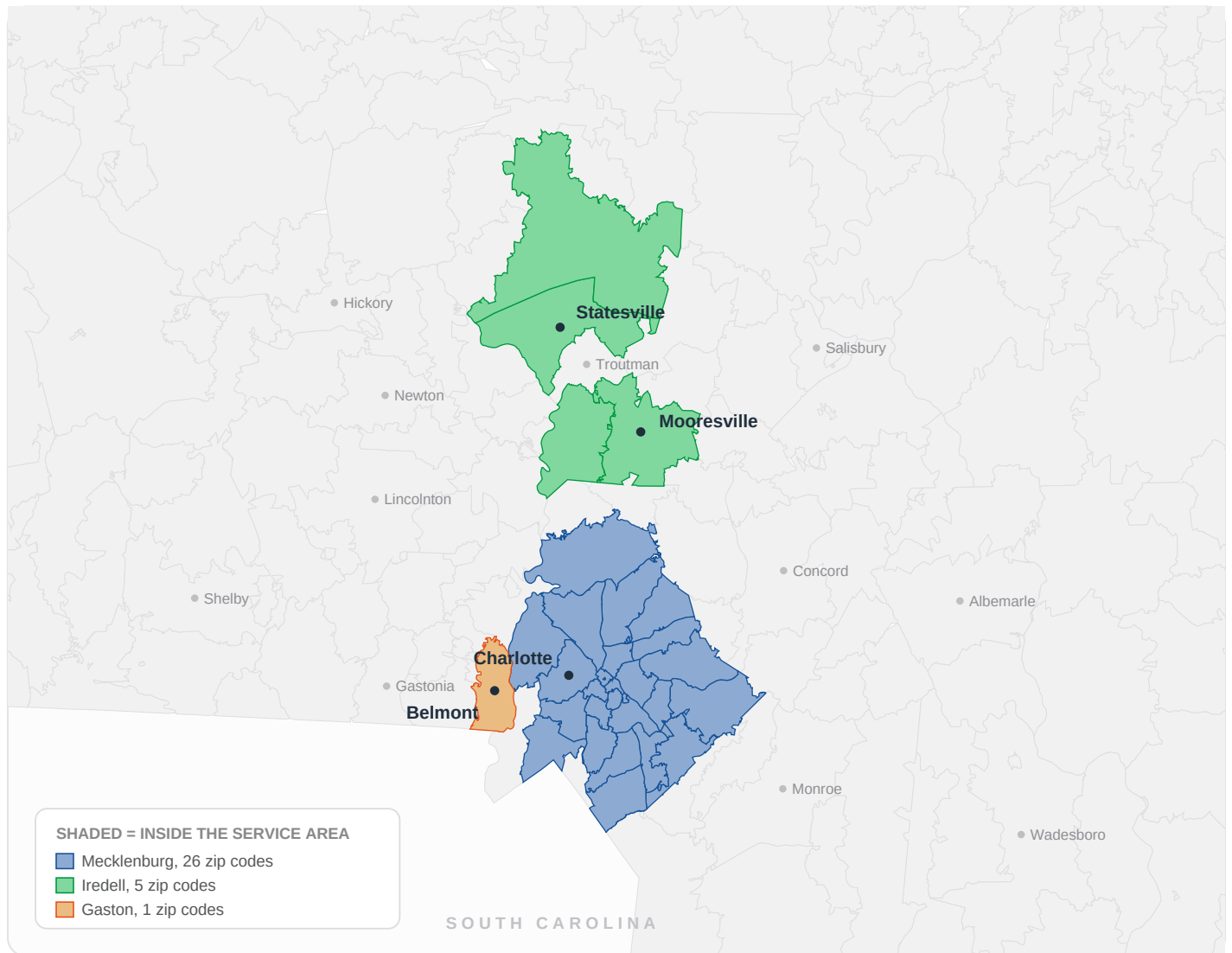
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Tell us about your family

Where we come to you

iCare Therapy delivers ABA therapy in the family home across thirty two zip codes in Mecklenburg, Iredell and Gaston counties. If your address sits in a shaded area, a clinician travels to you.



The thirty two zip codes

Boundaries from U.S. Census ZCTAs. 28223 and 28687 have no Census boundary, so they are listed but not shaded.

- West Charlotte 28208, 28214, 28216
- East Charlotte / Hickory Grove 28212, 28215
- East Charlotte (central) 28203, 28204, 28205
- University City 28262, 28213
- North Charlotte 28206, 28269
- South Charlotte 28209, 28210, 28211, 28226, 28270
- Steele Creek / Southwest 28217, 28273
- Uptown / Myers Park 28202, 28207, 28223
- Mint Hill 28227
- Matthews 28105
- Huntersville 28078
- Ballantyne 28277
- Mooresville / Lake Norman 28115, 28117
- Statesville 28625, 28677, 28687
- Belmont / Gaston 28012

Not sure whether you are inside it?

Give a care coordinator your zip code and call (800) 264-1985

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How iCare Therapy supports the school year

Here is what we actually offer, in plain terms, so you can tell whether it fits before you spend a phone call finding out. Care is delivered in your home, and virtually for some care recipients. A care coordinator will tell you honestly if what you need sits outside that.

In-Home ABA Therapy

Registered Behavior Technicians working under licensed North Carolina Board Certified Behavior Analysts, in your home, on your routines.

[Learn more](#)

Caregiver Training

Coaching for the adults. Reinforcement, communication, de escalation, and caregiver resilience, so the plan holds when no clinician is there.

[Learn more](#)

Telehealth ABA

Virtual sessions when in person will not work. Availability depends on the care recipient's needs and on coverage.

[Learn more](#)

Insurance and Payment

We work with North Carolina Medicaid and most major insurers. Care coordinators handle eligibility, authorizations, and renewals.

[Learn more](#)

Meet the Team

The Board Certified Behavior Analysts, Registered Behavior Technicians, and care coordinators who would be working with your family.

[Learn more](#)

Apply for ABA Therapy

Start the referral. It takes a few minutes and a care coordinator follows up with you directly.

[Start the form](#)

Not sure which one you need?

Neither are most families on the first call, and that is fine. Tell a care coordinator what your week actually looks like and they will walk you through options, insurance, and next steps.

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North Carolina Medicaid and most major insurers

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