Caring for a child with special needs

A strengths-based planning guide for parents and caregivers

Start with the child

Make a one-page profile describing your child's strengths, interests, communication, daily routines, what helps with distress and the family's priorities.

Take the profile to clinic and school meetings. Ask how the child can participate in decisions in a way that works for them.

Coordinate health and learning

Ask a public clinic about assessment, rehabilitation or specialist referrals appropriate to the child. Keep copies of reports and follow-up dates.

Meet the school-based support team to discuss learning adjustments. A district education office can advise when additional support or school options are needed.

Support for the family

Check SASSA's Care Dependency Grant requirements if the child has a severe disability and needs full-time care. A medical assessment and eligibility rules apply.

Ask a social worker or parent organisation about local support and respite. Identify a trusted person who can share tasks; caregiver wellbeing matters.

Make your next step

- What are my child's strengths and priorities?

- What is the next referral or school meeting?

- Who can share the care this month?

Trusted sources and further reading

Department of Basic Education Inclusive Education

Care Dependency Grant

Special-needs school contacts

General information only. Ask a qualified local service for advice about your situation. For immediate danger in South Africa, call 112 from a cellphone, 10177 for an ambulance or 10111 for police. Sources checked 29 September 2026.