

Neurodevelopmental Centers of Excellence



Innovative and Equitable Care Delivery

Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has partnered with Neurodevelopmental Centers of Excellence (NDCs) for over four decades. NDCs are private, nonprofit organizations providing evaluation, diagnosis, coordinated treatment planning, and specialized therapy. Many NDCs are also early treatment providers and serve children from birth to age 3, while other serve children up to age 18. They also offer support and coaching to their parents and caregivers. This partnership has helped bridge the gap in equitable care delivery for children with special health care needs.

NDCs have been at the forefront of innovation by providing the best evidence-based therapies and expanding their reach to serve more populations. In 2019 with funding from DOH, several NDCs started testing telemedicine as a treatment option to provide care to families living in rural areas or lacking transportation. **This bold and equity-driven intervention led to an increase in the quality and frequency of patient care.** As early adopters of telemedicine, NDCs were able to continue providing some of their services to a population at a disproportionately higher risk during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Partnerships Add Value

The relationship between NDCs and DOH began in the early 1980s and has invaluable impacted children with special health care needs and their families. NDCs are recognized by the state Medicaid program and can bill Medicaid in a unique provider category. This designation also means NDCs can start services without prior approval, helping ensure timely access to crucial services.

The NDC must meet several criteria to earn designation as a Neurodevelopmental Center of Excellence. Criteria include having a Medical Director who ensures standards of excellence and staff for occupational, physical and speech therapies.

Access to these therapies has significantly lowered the financial burden of medical care for families. It has also improved the statewide healthcare system for children and youth with special health care needs. Early treatment services may also prevent the additional need for special education

For example, 29% of toddlers completing the early intervention services through NDC programs did not qualify for special education at age 3.

In 1 Year, Gaelen Is Thriving

Gaelen has received physical therapy and occupational therapy treatment at PeaceHealth Medical Group children's therapy in Bellingham for one year. After attending therapy sessions, my child is now capable of climbing stairs, adjusting to all types of change more smoothly, and is better able to play with his older brothers! He truly enjoys playing with the therapists and trying new things (huge deal) every week. This clinic is wonderful. The service is amazing and you can see they are passionate about ensuring the kids have what they need to succeed.

Gaelen has made huge gains over the course of the year. To see him catching up to children his age after his heart transplant is invaluable for him and for our family.

-Danae Johnson, Whatcom County

Reaching More Families In Need

- Since 2014, NDCs have consistently reached more people in Washington
- **18** Neurodevelopmental Centers of Excellence in Washington
- **29,921** clients served in 2019 and **18,815** in 2018
- **\$642,799** of General State Funds supported the NDCs in 2020
- **57%** of clients served were age 3 or younger (2018 Child Health Intake Form report)
- **70%** of clients served in 2018 were in families living at or **below 210% of the federal poverty level**
- **NDC therapies significantly lower the financial burden of medical care for families.** They improve the healthcare system for children and youth with special health care needs across the state.
- Families report **fast cognitive, motor control and other developmental advances** following NDC specialist therapies, leading to improved educational success. For some families, these advances **have exceeded the expectations of primary care physicians** for mobility, speech, feeding, and mainstream classroom success.



Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

Washington State Department of Health
CYSHCN@doh.wa.gov | 360-236-3512
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