



Autism and China's 15th Five-Year Plan

- Three-Part Series -

Part 2.

Autism in China - Policy Development & Action Planning

Summary

In Part 2 we explore the accelerated development of national policy and action planning on Autism in China in line with the *15th Five-Year Plan*. The planning foundations were laid in 2024 with the *Action Plan for Promoting Care for Children with Autism (2024-2028)* and further brought to life in July 2026 through the *15th Five-Year Plan for the Protection and Development of Persons with Disabilities*.

Reform of the National Autism Support Ecosystem

'Action Plan for Promoting Care for Children with Autism (2024-2028)'

This national policy notification ('*Action Plan*'), dated July 21, 2024, was issued under the official seals of seven key organisations – the *China Disabled Persons' Federation* (CDPF), the *Ministry of Education*, the *Ministry of Civil Affairs*, the *National Health Commission*, the *National Medical Insurance Administration*, the *Communist Youth League*, and the *All-China Women's Federation*.

The overall aim of the *Action Plan* is to significantly strengthen support and care services for children with Autism and their families, through a coordinated and integrated effort and alignment across China provinces, regions and cities and similarly across various institutions and organisations.

The policy statement points to an increased focus of various regions and departments to strengthen Autism assessment and diagnosis, and to improve rehabilitation and education standards for children with Autism. However, it acknowledges that service provision for children with Autism still faces many outstanding difficulties and problems and goes on to outline the unified action required across the nation.

The policy's guiding principles include adhering to the 'people-centered development philosophy' reflected in the *15th Five-Year Plan* with a specific emphasis on improving the 'entire life cycle' of care and service for Autistic people and fundamental protection and safeguarding of Autistic children.

Most notably amongst the guiding principles is a commitment to strengthen overall planning and coordination, linkages and resource integration with an emphasis on addressing shortcomings and deficiencies and to promote the improvement of care service standards for Autistic children.

It includes a goal of national improvement within five years in the mechanisms for care services and systems for children with Autism along with increased service capacity and safeguard conditions for the entire developmental process of children with Autism.

In line with the general approach to accountabilities for implementation, the Action Plan emphasises the requirement for cities, provinces and regions to take the lead on the development of infrastructure to better support Autistic children and their families including:

- the development of a rehabilitation service network;
- addressing professional practitioner talent shortages through targeted training and career promotion;
- development of quality standards for rehabilitation institutions including more robust registration and supervision;
- allocation of special education schools for children with Autism including the encouragement of larger cities and provincial capitals to build special education schools for children with Autism and the development of educational infrastructure, including in higher education to support these schools;
- bolstering basic insurance and welfare funding mechanisms for families with Autistic children; and
- and the development of ‘family-centred’ early intervention services

The *Action Plan* also focuses on ‘capacity building’, calling for a unified and coordinated implementation effort across the entire apparatus of national policy execution including education, civil affairs, health and medical insurance departments and relevant NGOs.

Capacity Building to Support National Improvement in Autism Care and Support

- Sufficient allocation of public service funding on the supply of required services, facilities and initiatives
- Higher levels of awareness training for relevant institutions
- Promotion of scientific research collaboration
- Significantly raised public awareness with a focus on identification, diagnosis, early intervention and rehabilitation knowledge
- Development of local implementation plans to be coordinated and overseen by the *China Disabled Person's Federation* and upstream reporting on implementation by December each year

Disability Support Becomes an Active National Priority and a Priority for Local Action

On 1 July 2026, China's *State Council Working Committee on Disability Affairs* issued the *15th Five-Year Plan for the Protection and Development of Persons with Disabilities (2026-2030)*.

On July 27, the systemically important national umbrella organisation, the *China Disabled Persons Federation (CDPF)*, announced key elements of the new national plan centred on social protection, legal safeguards and technology.

New Targets

There are new major targets compared with the preceding *Five-Year Plan* including the creation of one million new jobs for people with disabilities and minimum targeted levels of service delivery.

'Life-Cycle' Focus Including a Strong Emphasis on Education and Employment

There is an overall policy shift to real and practical outcomes for people, where community health is prioritised over an emphasis on treatment alone. For example, the new plan emphasises 'life-cycle support' for disability to address evolving needs and changed demographics with a new, increased focus on better harnessing technology transformation.

Specific priorities reflect a more holistic, systemic and long term focus on the lived experience of disabled people. This includes more inclusive and special education, strengthened vocational education and skills training, and expanded employment access through various measures including greater

vocational education for people with disabilities and ‘demand-oriented’ training.

New Science and Technology Focus

The new *Five-Year Plan* elevates science and technology to a stand-alone priority for the first time with particular emphasis on how innovation can transform rehabilitation. The plan also outlines measures to enable innovators in these domains by bringing about access to ‘real world environments’.

Adult Guardianship

Recognising the struggles for parents and caregivers with long term dependent children, the new plan also aims to improve legal frameworks regarding adult guardianship for people with disabilities.

Next – Recommendations for Hong Kong SAR

In Part 3 of our Series, we will discuss the implications of the *Action Plan for Promoting Care for Children with Autism (2024-2028)* and the *15th Five-Year Plan for the Protection and Development of Persons with Disabilities* for the **Hong Kong SAR**. We will outline **five recommendations** for the city to optimise its contribution to the national effort.

September 2026