

Exceptional Children Information for Parents

August 19, 2020

Family Support Network

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Every parent anticipates the birth of a healthy, happy baby. But when a child is born prematurely or with a disability, the effect can be devastating and life changing for that family. In addition to the stress of the disability itself, financial strain due to medical bills or quality care, isolation, anger, embarrassment, grief, and protectiveness all merge to bombard the family. This has an effect on the whole family including the siblings. **Family Support Network is here to help!**

Our deep belief that all children have abilities and gifts is the core foundation of Family Support Network (FSN). We provide information to help families see the possibilities for their child and the tools so they can turn that potential into reality. FSN teaches parents a variety of skills to enable them to become confident in raising their child with special needs. Family Support Network of North Carolina (FSN-NC) has been providing support to families of children with special healthcare needs or disabilities and the service providers who work with them since 1985. FSN-NC is a state-wide network of 12 Regional Affiliated Programs and the Family Support Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Regional Programs are also affiliates of NC Parent to Parent, the fund raising arm for the FSN programs. FSN directors and most staff have a child or other family member with special needs, giving them the unique position of truly understanding the obstacles families face.

While FSN programs across the state may offer different services for families, the things we all have in common are information and referral, Triple P (Positive Parent Program) Stepping Stones, and Parent to Parent matching. Parent to Parent matching is when we connect the family of a newly diagnosed child with a trained Parent Mentor. We provide Parent Mentor Training to those parents who have adjusted to their child's diagnosis and are ready to volunteer to help other families. The Parent Mentor Training includes the grief/adjustment process, communication skills, importance of confidentiality, record keeping, and information on community resources. Talking with another parent in a similar situation can help parents feel less alone and more hopeful.

Regional FSN programs may offer many different services including positive social supports through parent groups, systems navigation, training and workshops, educational advocacy, dad's groups, sibling support, support for Latino and Hmong families, and NICU support. We help parents build advocacy and leadership skills. Throughout the year FSN programs holiday and other social activities for families.

By giving support to families at a critical time, we are making a positive influence in the lives of children with special needs. FSN helps relieve the stresses and isolation that families feel, creating more resilient families, and giving parents the confidence, they need to raise their child. Parents who participate in our programs say they are better able to cope with the realities of raising a child who has a disability. One parent said *"I credit FSN with saving me. I was in a desperate place the night I went to my first parent support meeting. I left there feeling completely renewed for the struggles ahead. I found understanding, friendship, information, support, validation, comfort, hope, perspective, strength and peace."*

Please contact your regional FSN program if you want support or would like to volunteer to be a Parent Mentor. To find your regional FSN program, please go to <https://fsnnc.org/> or call Access Family Support at 800-852-0042.



Family Support Network™ of North Carolina

Check out previous newsletters for other resources.

<https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/parent-resources/parent-newsletter-2020>



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

<https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov>

Important Links

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education](#)
- [N.C. Department of Health & Human Services](#)
 - [Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)
- [N.C. Department of Public Instruction](#)
 - [Lighting Our Way Forward \(Summary\)](#)
- [No Kid Hungry](#)
- [NCDPI-COVID-19 Responses & Resources](#)

Tennessee's Parent Training and Information Center has created guides to aid families as they prepare for how their children will receive services and supports. Please visit [their page](#) to download these helpful guides.

Upcoming Events

- [Autismo: Estrategias para el comportamiento difícil](#) (Aug 26-virtual)
- [Navigating the Challenges of Online Learning and Telehealth Services](#) (Aug 27-virtual)
- [After the \(Autism\) Diagnosis: Get Answers, Get Help, Get Going – Triangle area](#) (Aug 31-virtual)
- [The Arc's 2020 Annual Meeting](#) (Sept 15-virtual)
- [Duke HEARS: Family Resilience](#) (Sept 19-virtual)
- [Continuity of Learning During COVID-19](#) (recorded 3-part webinar from OSEP)

Do you have an upcoming event you'd like to share with the community? Please email with information.

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