



The kids are ready to go back to school, ARE YOU?

It's that time again— new clothes, pencils, binders, folders, back packs, the list is endless. Getting our children with special needs ready is fun and exhausting. Just as important as our children getting ready for school is that we, their parents, are ready for school as well. We have all heard that we must be advocates on our child's behalf. But what exactly does being an advocate mean?

The definition of advocate:

1. somebody giving support— somebody who speaks in favor of someone
2. helper— somebody who acts or intercedes on behalf of another

So how are you going to fill this role? Here are some practical tips for becoming your child's advocate.

1. Get Educated

It is important to find out every thing you can about your child's disability. Read everything you can get your hands on. Look for local and national organizations that provide resources and tips about methods that have been successful for children with the disability you are seeking answers for.

Once your child is school age you will also need to educate yourself about the Special Education Process & your child's rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IEA). Attending a local workshop will be very informative and help get you started. Look in the workshop section of the newsletter for upcoming workshops in your area.

2. Get connected

Connecting with other parents of special needs children is an invaluable source of emotional support as well as expertise. No one else can offer you the same type of insights into your local school system as parents whose children have attended there & worked with the teachers, principals and Exceptional Children's administrators. If you aren't comfortable with face to face support groups you can contact your Family Support Network Coordinator and ask to be matched with a trained Support Parent. So whether you prefer to attend a parent group or have one to one support the main thing to remember is that it helps to have the support and encouragement of someone who *truly* knows and understands what you are going through!

3. Get organized

Put together an advocacy notebook or filing system with sections for school records, medical records, evaluations, letters from teachers/school staff & one with specific information concerning your child's diagnosis. You will also want to include copies of letters you have written to school personnel or other service providers with a contact log used to track who you have contacted, why you contacted them and what is expected to be done after the contact. Bring your notebook (bible) with you to your scheduled meetings. You will have all the information you may need at your fingertips as well as being perceived by others at the meeting as well prepared and a professional part of the team. For help and ideas on putting together your notebook contact your Family Support Network Coordinator.

4. Get specific

One the most important skills a good advocate can have is making good decisions. In order to make good decisions concerning your child you need to have the best options and the most accurate information. The only dumb question is the one not asked! If you need more information ask for it and keep asking until you receive the answer. When you want to see something different happening for your child be sure to submit your request in writing along with suggestions you may have or ideas that can be looked at. You don't have to have all the answers but you may be the one that needs to ask the questions in order for things to change.

5. Become a great communicator

Communicating with the professionals who serve your child is crucial. Learning how to be assertive and persistent without letting anger and aggression take over will help you keep the focus on your child and the issue/concern at hand. Although you may be uncomfortable in a room of professionals never forget that you are an expert on your child! No one else can provide the knowledge, experience and insight you can about your child. Seek support, gather information, find resources so you can be your child's best advocate and cheerleader.

Family Support Network is a program of Region A Partnership For Children and an affiliate of Family Support Network of North Carolina, serving Cherokee, Clay, Haywood, Graham, Jackson, Macon and Swain Counties and the Qualla Boundary.



CHECK OUT WHERE YOUR LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS FOR CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS ARE: CHEROKEE, CLAY, GRAHAM, HAYWOOD, JACKSON, MACON & SWAIN COUNTIES

Family Support Network of Region A

367 Dellwood Road

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Waynesville, NC 28786

828—456-8631 Ext 29

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Toll Free: 1-888-383-0822

Program Coordinator

Julie Davis

julie@regionakids.org

828-456-8631 ext. 29

828-226-1198

Haywood

Mom's Morning Jam & Java Fridays from 8:30-9:30am. We meet at Panacea Coffee House. When there is no school we do not meet!

Parent's Night Out meets the 2nd Tuesday of the month from 5:30-7:30 at New Covenant Church, Clyde Contact Michele Holden at 235-0993 or mom-michele2030@bellsouth.net for more information!

NAMI Support Group meet the 3rd Thursday of the month at First United Methodist Church, Asbury room in Waynesville. 6pm

Jackson/Swain

Autism Support Group meets the 1st Friday of the month at Christ Fellowship

Church, Cherokee. Contact Brandi West at 488-1526 for more information.

Cherokee Support Group

Meets the 3rd. Tuesday of the month at the Dora Reed Center. Contact Kathy Norris at 497-3682 for details.

Support Group for people with food allergies and those trying a wheat-free diet Contact Karen White, nutritionist at WCU, at 227-2088 for more information.

Macon

Parents Night Out—Time and location to be announced Contact Ellen Hodgins at 828-369-7529 for more information.

Would you like to start a group for parents who have children with special needs in your county? Please contact Julie Davis @ 456-8631 ext.29 for more information! We need you!

Community Early Learning Groups

Opportunity for structured play with your child 0-5. Groups meet weekly. To find out the day & time the group meets in your county call 586-0661 or emma@regionakids.org or kristi@regionakids.org

Would you like to attend a conference to learn more about your child's disability? FSN has stipends available to help cover the cost so you can attend. Call FSN of Region A for an application. 828-456-8631.

Care to Share

The biggest challenge with having a child with a disability is the not knowing what might happen. I guess that is just life! We have been on a roller coaster ride with our son, who has Down Syndrome. We are learning medical

terms, procedures, and medications that can be a challenge. The greatest joy this child has brought to our lives is when he smiles and coos at us with those sweet loving eyes. There is so much sweetness in his whole being.

He really shows me that no matter what life deals you, to have strength and courage. I never saw a child go through so much and still be happy, loving and sweet.

Jessica Brandt—

Regional Events

3rd Annual WNC Run/Walk for Autism

Carrier Park, Asheville NC
September 20, 2008
9:00 am

This event includes the **Diamond Brand Outdoors 5k** and for children, ages 6 and under, the **Tot Trot**.

To register for the walk and for more information regarding ,donations, running with a team, volunteering and other information, visit the Autism Society of North Carolina website:
www.autismsociety-nc.org



Annual Family Fun Day

Hosted by Asheville Parks and Recreation at Carrier Park off Amboy Road.
Saturday, September 27, 2008 11:00 am-3:00 pm

Family Fun Day will include entertainment, music, crafts, games, informational booths and food for persons with disabilities and their families. This event will be a time to advocate for individuals of all abilities and ages and encourage inclusion in the community as well as recognize diversity in our community.

No registration required. Admission is FREE.

Buddy Walk 2008

Western North Carolina Down Syndrome Alliance is holding an annual Buddy walk, sponsored by Asheville parks and recreation at Carrier park in Asheville, NC on Saturday, October 11, 2008.

Volunteers begin at 9:00 am
Registration begins at 11:00 am
Buddy walk begins at 12:00 pm
Lunch and games after the walk until 3:00 pm
All children with DS will receive a free t-shirt!



For **pre-registration form** and **pledge form** please visit the WNC down syndrome alliance website:
www.wncdsa.org



For more information contact Cara Gregory: Cara.Gregory@bcsemail.org

LOCAL WORKSHOPS & CONFERENCES

Understanding your Child's IEP September 9, 2008– 5:30-8:00– New Covenant Church, Clyde

AT this workshop you will learn the what, why, who and how of your child's IEP. Dinner and childcare provided with registration. Call 235-0993 to register.

10th Annual Parent Professional Conference: It's All About Communication– 9/11/08-9/12/08-9AM to 4:15 PM– MAHEC-Asheville, NC 828-257-4400

The ability to communicate effectively is an important one for children, their families, and the professionals who serve them - whether it's a child who struggles with communication skills, a parent who strives to understand her/his child's communication issues and obtain needed services, or a professional who works with the family to understand and treat the child. This 10th Annual Parent-Professional Conference focuses on a variety of these communication issues. \$39/parents \$99/professionals

Exploring NC's Extended Content Standards-September 18-TC Roberson High School-Asheville, NC-6:30-8:30PM

Please join us as we learn more about The NC Extended Content Standards & what they mean for your child and how your child's IEP team can use the Extended Standards to explore new possibilities for enhancing your child's education! To register contact ECAC at 1-866-545-5299 or 828-255-1972

Positive Behavioral Supports-September 23-5:30-8:00-Murphy Middle School Cafeteria

Too often, children with difficult behaviors are punished or excluded from activities. Difficult behaviors result from unmet needs and all behavior, even when it's difficult or challenging is "meaning-full". It is important for parents and teachers to work together to understand and reduce challenging behaviors. Dinner and Childcare provided with registration-call 456-8631 ext. 29 or 1-800-962-6817 ext. 17

RESOURCES

MISSION OF FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK

Twelve Alternatives to Lashing Out at Your Child

The next time everyday pressures build up to the point where you feel like lashing out -- STOP!

Try any of these simple alternatives. You'll feel better... and so will your child.

- Take a deep breath... and another. Then remember you are the adult.
- Close your eyes and imagine you're hearing what your child is about to hear.
- Press your lips together and count to 10... or better yet, to 20.
- Put *your child* in a time-out chair (remember this rule: one time-out minute for each year of age.)
- Put *yourself* in a time-out chair. Think about why you are angry: is it your child, or is your child simply a convenient target for your anger?
- **Phone a friend.** Don't know someone whose child has special needs? Call us for a Parent to Parent match- 828-456-8631 ext. 29 or email-julie@regionakids.org.
- If someone can watch the children, go outside and take a walk.
- Take a hot bath or splash cold water on your face.
- Hug a pillow.
- Turn on some music. Maybe even sing along.
- Pick up a pencil and write down as many helpful words as you can think of. Save the list.
- Call for prevention information: 1-800-CHILDREN

The mission of the program is: To enhance the lives of children in the seven western counties of North Carolina with, or at risk for, special needs by providing emotional support and information to the families who care for them, and by encouraging parent and professional collaboration in the design and delivery of services for these families.

ECAC IEP Partners Informational Webinar

Tuesday, September 16, 2008

7:30 pm– 8:30 pm

We are actively seeking volunteers for our newly redesigned IEP Partners program.

All volunteers are provided training, materials, ongoing support and a small stipend.

Parents of children with disabilities or special needs often tell us how helpful it would have been to have had “in person” support to prepare for IEP and school meetings. They frequently call and express their desire for someone to go with them to their child’s IEP meeting. We also hear from experienced parents that they want to find a way “to give back” or help other parents have a better Special Education experience. ECAC’s IEP Partners program trains volunteers to do just that!

To register for this session, for more information or if you have special needs contact 800-962-6817 and ask for Dawn Moore (ext.25)

If you do not have access to the internet, you can still participate via conference call using a toll-free number!





**Family Support Network of
Region A Partnership for Children
116 Jackson Street
Sylva, NC 28779**

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Upcoming Support Parent Trainings!

September 5, 2008	Haywood County	10-2
September 19th	Macon County	10-2
October 3rd	Jackson County	10-2

We are looking for parents of children with special needs who can offer support to another parent of a child with special needs. The unique support of a parent who truly understands what a new parent is going through can provide a sense of relief and support that no other individual can. Please join us to become a valuable support to another family. Call 828-456-8631 ext. to register for one of these upcoming Support Parent Trainings!!!!!!