

# Parent Parent of Wisconsin

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...making connections statewide

## **BECOMING A SUPPORT PARENT**

Would you like to support other parents that have a child with a disability or special health care need? Could you draw on your own experience to offer empathy, inspiration, and a listening ear in times of need?

*No parent should feel alone. Ever.*

Becoming a Support Parent provides a unique opportunity to encourage a parent who is walking a similar path. We are always looking for parents who are at a place in their own journey to support another parent who requests a one-to-one parent match. We have found that to be an effective Support Parent, it is helpful to be at least one year out from your child's diagnosis.

## **WHAT MAKES A GOOD SUPPORT PARENT?**

- Communication skills: non-judgmental and active listening
- Self-awareness and self-reflection; understanding your own values and beliefs
- Maturity and empathy resulting from your own adaptation process
- Listening carefully rather than making assumptions or comparisons
- Share your own hopes, resources, and practical experiences
- Maintaining confidentiality is important to assure privacy and trust for both parents
- Relate respectfully to people of different backgrounds and cultures

## **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A SUPPORT PARENT? WHAT DO SUPPORT PARENTS DO?**

As a representative of Parent to Parent of Wisconsin, a Support Parent provides emotional support and information to families of individuals with disabilities or other special health care needs. A Support Parent provides a safe listening environment and can be a wealth of information to other families. Listening is a priority.

Support Parents connect with other families, either by telephone or by e-mail, and provide a kind of understanding that no one else can provide. Support Parents participate in "active listening" and provide an opportunity for openness in a non-judgmental relationship. Support Parents DO NOT provide any form of medical advice or professional counseling.

Support Parents might support families navigating a new diagnosis, health care systems, surgery, mental health, behavioral issues, special education, sibling and family issues, community resources, and life transitions. At other times, they may support parents facing sleepless nights, experiencing frequent hospitalizations, helping their child wear a mask or looking for sensory appropriate restaurants, stores, etc.

## **HOW LONG DO PARENTS SERVE AS SUPPORT PARENTS?**

We do not require volunteers to serve any particular length of time. We are a network of families of individuals with disabilities or other special needs and because of this each of us, volunteers and staff, have to attend to our family's needs first and foremost.

When we contact a volunteer Support Parent about providing support for another family, we first ask them if they are able to provide support at this time. A Support Parent can simply answer "No" and we will not ask any further questions. We can temporarily remove a Support Parent from our active list until they let us know they are again ready to support other parents. Likewise, we will permanently remove any Support Parent from our active files as soon as the parent requests us to do so.

When you do agree to support a Referred Parent, you are committing to calling/contacting them at least 4 times within the first two months.

### **WHY REQUIRE SUPPORT PARENT TRAINING?**

1. Familiarize parents with Parent to Parent of Wisconsin so that you feel confident in being a volunteer representative of the organization and fully understand the role and commitment of the Support Parent.
2. Provide time for parents to reflect on their own experiences as parents and, in group trainings, share experiences with other parents so that the newly recruited Support Parents can
  - Recognize similarities in parenting experiences even though the children have different disabilities, illnesses, or syndromes.
  - Learn about the different emotional states commonly experienced by parents of children with special needs.
  - Gain insight into what a family may be experiences even though you may not have personally experienced a particular emotional state.
3. Develop communication and listening skills to help Support Parents use and share their personal experiences in effective way.
  - Learn techniques to use when talking to a referral parent including guidelines for telephone contact.
  - Gain information on what may happen when you speak with a referral parent.
4. Share a solid foundation of information about available community resources.
5. Address the issue of Care for the Caregiver.

### **HOW DO I APPLY?**

Fill in our online application [here](#). Once you have completed your application, you will be contacted by Parent to Parent with information about upcoming trainings.

### **CONTACT US**

833-361-6300 (Families)

Email [P2PWI@chw.org](mailto:P2PWI@chw.org)

715-361-6307 (Professionals)

Website <https://p2pwi.org/>

