

Office of Family Initiatives

Mission

Ensure that the family/consumer voice is represented in the development of policies and programs available to children with special health care needs, their families and providers. Provide information, resources and opportunities that support the development of family-centered, accessible and culturally competent systems of care.

Who we are and what we do

Family Initiatives programs are designed and staffed by parents whose children have received Early Intervention services and/or have special health care needs, disabilities or chronic illnesses. Staff work regionally across the state to provide a variety of opportunities and supports for families including:

- Education, skill building and leadership development
- Information and referral
- Parent to Parent support
- Networking and partnership opportunities

Major Projects and activities of the Family Initiatives Unit:

The Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project (EIPLP): Staffed by a full time project director and four project coordinators, EIPLP works to ensure family participation across the EI service system, from the local program level to the statewide Interagency Coordinating Council and on to national leadership activities. The Project goal is to support families to grow lifelong leadership and advocacy skills that can be used within their families and communities. Training, mentoring, identification of opportunities and stipends for participation are offered. Information about EIPLP is available at www.eiplp.org, or by calling 1-877-353-4757.

Family TIES (Together in Enhancing Support) of Massachusetts: Statewide information, referral and parent-to-parent support network. Family TIES is staffed by a full time project director, a parent to parent coordinator and six regional parent coordinators. The Project provides a variety of supports and information to families whose children have special health needs and their providers including training, information about local and statewide resources and connection to parents with similar life circumstances. Family TIES serves as the Central Directory for Early Intervention Services. Information about Family TIES is available at www.massfamilyties.org, or by calling 1-800-905-8437.

Family Support Plan: Development of legislatively mandated [Chapter 171 Plan, M.G.L. Chapter 6A: Section 16F](#), based on substantial consultation with families. The Plan works to enhance flexible family supports and community inclusion for families whose children have special health care needs and disabilities. Information about the DPH Family Support plan is available by calling 617-624-5979 or on line at www.mass.gov/dph

Emergency Preparedness for families whose children have complex health care needs:

Development of and training about policies, resources and supports to ensure readiness in the event of emergencies. Facilitation of community based planning that includes families and incorporates information about additional and specific needs of children with complex special health needs.

Promoting Family-Professional Partnerships: As part of a commitment to meaningful family participation as a strategy to improve systems of care for children with special health needs and their families, MDPH contracts with New England Serve to develop and run the Family Professional Partners Institute an entity that recruits, trains and mentors families to take on partnership roles within health care organizations and offers organizations technical assistance and support to create roles for their family partners. Information about the Institute is available at www.neserve.org, or by calling 617-574-9493.

NCSEAM Family Survey implementation: Oversight of statewide implementation of a survey to all families whose children have been enrolled in a Massachusetts Early Intervention program for at least six months to determine % of families participating in Part C who report that EI Services have helped their family;

- a.) know their rights,
- b.) effectively communicate their children's needs,
- c.) help their children develop and learn