MICHIGAN FAMILY CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY IS PARENT LEADERSHIP MONTH

National Parent Leadership Month is an opportunity for organizations and communities to celebrate and appreciate parents who volunteer their time to improve the programs and policies that affect children, families, and communities.

Michigan has a rich history of parent leadership. In fact, Michigan was one of the very first states to pay parents as professionals in what was known as the Parent Participation Program. Started in the 1980's, this program became the Family Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs. The benefits of including families are clear; and the Family Center and MI F2F continue to elevate the voices of families and empower parents to have a seat at the table where decisions are being made.

The Family Center and MI F2F include families in several ways – from serving on advisory councils, membership on the Family Leadership Network, participating in the development and presentation of trainings and other programs, serving on workgroups, and supporting other families as peer mentors. We value the experience and expertise that families have and seek to include the family voice at all levels of the work we do.

The Family Center and MI F2F also offer leadership development opportunities through the ***Growing as Leaders: Leadership Series*** (see the last page of the newsletter for information about how to sign up) and the ***Parents Partnering for Change*** training, a collaboration between the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the Michigan Department of Education.

For more information about how to get involved or attend a parent training, please contact Kristen Reese, Family Center Family Engagement Analyst, at **reesek1@michigan.gov** or call the Family Phone Line at 800-359-3722.

WINTER 2025

A newsletter for families of children and youth with special health care needs, and the professionals who care for them.

Connecting you with information and news you can use.

A virtual publication brought to you by the Family Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs and the Michigan Family to Family Health Information Center

UPCOMING NEWSLETTERS – WE WANT YOUR IDEAS!

Michigan Family Connections is interested in hearing from you. We would love to get your input on what you would like to see in upcoming issues. Whether your organization is interested in being featured or you want to submit your idea for an article, please fill out our survey at the link below:

Newsletter Survey

NEW MOBILE APP FOR CREATING GOALS FOR CHILDREN

Welcome to the future of goal setting for families with children who have special health care needs or disabilities!

Introducing the new **Creating Goals for Children** mobile app. Designed by the Wisconsin Children with Medical Complexity Collaboration, the app was created with the aim to help families set child-driven goals.

The app takes in account that each child has unique needs and dreams. From preschoolers to young adults, the app contains example goals to guide you in the process.

With the app, kids are co-creators in establishing their future goals. This tool is specifically designed to foster inclusive

growth and development for children with special needs.

Forget about setting different goals for school, Medicaid waivers, and doctors. The app simplifies the process for you so you can consistently create goals across different programs, and all in one place.

The app is free and available for iPhone and Android. Look for it in your app store or use the QR codes below.

ARC OF OAKLAND ADVOCATES FOR CHANGES TO MI ABLE

The Arc of Oakland County recently announced a significant change for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families throughout Michigan. The Arc of Oakland County worked to remove a barrier preventing guardians from opening MiABLE accounts on behalf of their loved one.

Previously, individuals under "guardianship of the person" were unable to access the MiABLE savings program, which is designed to allow people with disabilities to save and invest money without jeopardizing their eligibility for government benefits.

Guardians were told that only those with "guardianship of the estate" could open these accounts. Because of this, many Michiganders turned to out-of-state programs to meet their needs.

After continued dialogue and the submission of documentation showing that guardianship of the person does, in fact, cover financial matters, MiABLE has revised its policy. Going forward, guardianship of the person in Michigan will be accepted for MiABLE current enrollment, provided that the proper documentation is submitted.

To further support families, a MiABLE representative said they will research previously denied accounts for re-evaluation under the new directive.

To read the full press release, visit:
The Arc of Oakland County

MiABLE Customer Service 844-656-7225
MiABLE Enrollment **www.miable.org**

BRIGHT FUTURES OFFERS QI RESOURCES FOR PROVIDERS

In 2002, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) established the Bright Futures National Center (BFNC) to spearhead implementation efforts and updates to the ***Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents***. These guidelines provide theory-based and evidence-driven guidance for all preventive care screenings and well child visits.

The BFNC not only leads efforts for implementation of the guidelines but also provides technical assistance and tools and resources for quality improvement (QI) for providers.

The Bright Futures Quality Improvement website offers information, tools, and links to networks and resources for practitioners wishing to participate in quality improvement efforts. The information can be used at the practice level to address desired health outcomes of importance to children and families in a particular practice, health care system, community, or state.

To learn more about what the Bright Futures Quality Improvement website can offer your healthcare practice, visit:

Bright Futures Quality Improvement

SPECIAL OLYMPICS POLAR PLUNGES AROUND THE STATE

Special Olympics Michigan is helping to create a world that accepts and welcomes every person regardless of ability or disability. The Polar Plunge is a series of events where people go to the extreme to support Special Olympics Michigan.

Organized by committees made up of community volunteers, law enforcement, and staff, the Polar Plunges involve participants raising money by jumping into freezing bodies of water in winter.

The Polar Plunge is the biggest fundraiser for Special Olympics Michigan. All funds raised by Plungers help Special Olympics Michigan provide year-round training and services to over 23,000 athletes with disabilities across the state.

Fundraising is required to participate in the Polar Plunge, with a minimum of $100. There are also incentives for participants based on how much they raise.

If jumping into freezing cold water in the middle of a Michigan winter sounds like fun to you, there are a multitude of events taking place all over Michigan. To locate an event, register, or donate, visit:

Register - Polar Plunge

BATTLING THE BLUES WHEN WINTER COMES TO MICHIGAN

As we head into the thick of dreary winter days in Michigan, some people may find that they struggle with SAD, also known as “Seasonal Affective Disorder.”

SAD is appropriately named for a type of depression that gets worse with the decrease in daylight during the winter months. Seasonal Affective Disorder is thought to affect up to 5% of Americans.

Recent studies put Michigan residents in the top five states at risk for this type of depression. Parents of children with special needs already face higher rates of depression and anxiety, so they may be even more vulnerable.

Counseling, light therapy, exercise, and antidepressant medications are common treatments. It is important to recognize when a case of the “winter blues” is becoming more serious and get professional help.

If you or a loved one is struggling, the following resources may be a place to start:

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) - Symptoms & causes - Mayo Clinic

Michigan Psychological Care | Seasonal Depression: What It Is and What Causes It

4 tips to help manage Seasonal Affective Disorder | Central Michigan University

Find Help - Michigan 2-1-1

TRANSITION RESOURCES FOR BLACK AUTISTIC GIRLS

Funded by the WITH Foundation, National Family Voices convened the Advancing the Quality of Health Care Transition for Black Autistic Adolescent Girls project.

In this project, they sought out the health care experiences of Black autistic girls and women, including those who are self-diagnosed, and worked with them to inform recommendations and strategies for health care providers to improve engagement and access to equitable care.

They knew that girls are less likely than boys to receive a timely diagnosis of autism, with Black children being more likely to experience misdiagnosis and delayed diagnosis. For Black girls, being at the intersection of these disparities, they experience the impact of both.

They also recognized that even with the knowledge of the emotional and physical risks faced by Black autistic girls and women, the literature was disturbingly silent on their experiences and needs.

As a result, the staff and a product development team, composed of five

Black autistic women and two care givers, worked to develop multi-model tools for primary care providers and families to better understand the health care and health care transition (HCT) needs of Black autistic adolescent girls.

The collection includes info briefs, videos, flyers, and recommendations on a variety of topics, including *Finding the Right Fit with Your Health Care Provider - Guide for Self-Advocates*, and *Engaging and Supporting Black Autistic Girls and Their Care Partners in the Health Care Setting - For Providers.*

These resources and more can be found at:

Resources | Center for Transition to Adult Health Care for Youth with Disabilities - Family Voices

CAMP VIRTUAL RESOURCE FAIR AND SCHOLARSHIP INFO

The Family Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs is excited to offer a special Camp Virtual Resource Fair for families interested in assistance to send their child to camp.

During this event, you will learn more about the Camp Scholarship Program (now increased to $500 per child) and different summer camp opportunities around the state.

The Virtual Camp Resource Fair will be **February 12th, 2025, from 11 am to 12 pm**. It will be held on Microsoft Teams.

Please use the following link to register:

Camp Virtual Resource Fair Registration

Not able to attend? Get the FC Camp Scholarship application **here**.

GREAT START TO QUALITY RESOURCE CENTERS CAN HELP

Great Start to Quality is a program that provides support to help strengthen Michigan's providers of early childcare and education. One of the ways they do this is through ten Resource Centers across Michigan.

The Resource Centers offer access to great information for childcare programs and childcare providers, as well as assistance to families.

Programs and Providers can find:

- Coaching and consultation to support quality improvement
- Information about training, professional development, and workforce development
- Learning kits

Parents and families can find:

- Assistance with finding quality licensed programs for children ages 0-12
- Information on financial assistance

Both families and providers get access to a lending library with books, CDs, and other learning materials.

To find the Resource Center in your area, visit: **Resource Centers - Great Start to Quality**

MICHIGAN HANDS & VOICES SUPPORTS FAMILIES

Michigan Hands & Voices (MI H&V) is a non-profit organization that supports families of children who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing (DDBHH). They believe all children deserve to reach their full potential. They support all levels of deafness and hearing loss.

MI H&V's main program is called "Guide by Your Side." Parents of newly diagnosed children are able to receive a visit from a Parent Guide. Parent Guides are parents of a child who is DHH and trained to provide support. They help with resources and services with a focus on helping families be successful.

MI H&V also offers support through the Guide Program with Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard of Hearing adults. These individuals are trained to meet with parents and share their experiences. They can help parents feel confident in raising a child who is DDBHH.

They also offer a program called ASTra (Advocacy, Support, and Training). This program provides families with advocates and trainings to help families and school professionals involved in the child's education.

Lastly, MI H&V offers events throughout the year for families to gather and build relationships. They offer online events monthly and several in-person events during the year.

For more information, visit their website at: **Support for Families of Deaf/Hard of Hearing Children | Michigan Hands & Voices**

UPCOMING ONLINE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

We are excited to share with you some of our upcoming 2025 online learning opportunities brought to you by MI Family to Family and the Family Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs.

Learning Connections Webinars

- Children with Special Needs Fund, 1/30/25
- Doctor Visits, Play Dates, Hairbrushes, Oh My! Navigating Life's Everyday Challenges, 2/26/25
- Children's Special Health Care Services 101/Insurance Premium Benefit, 3/12/25
- Learn about Family Center Conference Scholarships! 4/9/25

Navigating Healthcare Workshops

- An Introduction to the Children's Waiver Program in Michigan, 3/20/25
- Healthcare Transition for Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs, 5/15/25

Growing as Leaders: Leadership Series
(in collaboration with the Parent Leadership in State Government initiative)

- Strategies for Effective Storytelling, 2/18/25
- Unlocking Your Potential: Opportunities for Family Leaders, 4/17/25

For a complete list and registration, visit:

24_25 Learning Registration

WHO WE ARE

The Michigan Family to Family Health Information Center (MI F2F) is a federally funded project*.

They share resources and information on disability and health issues with families of children and youth with special health care needs in Michigan.

MI F2F also works with health and other professionals. MI F2F helps families make informed decisions and supports families to partner with professionals.

For more information and resources, look for us on Facebook or visit our website.

MI Family to Family Website

*This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The contents are those of the Michigan Family to Family staff and do not represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. The sharing of resources is for your consideration only. Use at your own discretion.

The Family Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (Family Center) is the statewide parent-directed center within Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

The primary role of the Family Center is to offer emotional support, information and connections to community-based resources to families of children and youth with special health care needs, including all children who have, or are at an increased risk for physical, behavioral, developmental, or emotional conditions.**

Family Center Direct Line 1-517-241-7630
CSHCS Family Phone Line 1-800-359-3722

Family Center Website

**Children do not have to be enrolled in CSHCS to receive services from the Family Center.