

# WEST VIRGINIA PARENT TRAINING & INFORMATION

## SERVING FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL-NEEDS STATEWIDE

### STARTING NEW PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS IN YOUR LOCAL AREA...

Life as a special needs parent can be overwhelming and stressful. It can be even harder when you are surrounded by people who don't share your experiences. You may feel alone and don't know where to turn for support. Parent support groups can immerse you in families with similar experiences bringing you much needed support for your daily life. They can also provide other benefits - emotionally and knowledge based. To get the conversation started, here are 4 reasons why you should join a parent support group.

- ✓ Share Information with one another. You can share experiences on certain diets, programs, funding, services, etc. You can also share information on camps, doctors, therapist, and more. The possibilities are endless when you have other parents that you can use as resources. Also, you have a WV Parent Training & Information Trainer to answer educational questions as they arise and provide information and resources too.
- ✓ Find children who have similar interests as your child. This could mean new friends for your child. You can set up play dates and encourage your child to make new friends and develop social skills.
- ✓ Make new friends yourself. As a special needs parent, you may not have a lot of time committed to your social life and you may begin to feel lonely. It is important to recognize that you have to care for yourself too and spending time with friends can be a good start. You may feel more at ease spending time with someone who has similar experiences as you. Even just going out for an hour to grab coffee with a friend can give you time to take a break and re-group for the rest of the day.
- ✓ Emotional support. Family members and friends who aren't in similar situations may not understand and may not provide the support system you need. You may feel out of place and alone; feelings of isolation are extremely common for parents of children with special needs. Meeting parents who can relate can develop a sense of community.

Joining a parent support group may help you develop in all areas of your life. It may even help you learn critical information and make new friends for you and your child. A support group is created to provide support and it is okay to take time out of the day to take care of yourself and relate to other parents. We hope these reasons can help get you thinking and considering why a support group may work for you.

If you have any questions about joining a local support group, don't hesitate to call us at (800) 281-1436 or 304-472-5697 or contact us at [vvpti@aol](mailto:vvpti@aol).