



# Family TIES of Massachusetts

## Parent-to-Parent Program

Providing information and emotional support to parents who have a child with a disability, chronic illness, or special needs

### What is Family TIES of Massachusetts?

Family TIES, *Together In Enhancing Support*, is a statewide information and support network for families of children with disabilities or chronic illness. It is a project of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, funded and in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health and Nutrition, Division for Perinatal, Early Childhood & Special Health Needs. Our staff is made up of parents of children with special needs who have personally benefited from meeting experienced parents who have paved the way for our families. We offer information and support to any family who has a child with a disability or chronic condition.

### What is Parent-to-Parent?

Our Parent-to-Parent Program brings together parents facing similar challenges in raising their children with special needs. We believe that sharing experiences provides strength and support to each other.

### Seeking Support

Parents may contact us in search of a listening ear—another parent who has faced some of the same issues and concerns as they now face. This may be in response to a new diagnosis, a new challenge, or just to recharge their batteries.

### Sharing Support

One of the greatest gifts that parents gain in raising their children is *experience*. In offering the wisdom that comes from each challenge we face, we lighten the load of those who follow us while validating the value of the lessons we have learned.

### Who are Support Parents?

A support parent is someone who is trained to listen, share concerns, and offer information and support, with respect for confidentiality and cultural and individual differences.

### How can you participate?

Please contact your Regional Coordinator if you would like to be matched with a support parent. You are welcome to participate in our “Listening and Learning” training when you feel you would like to offer support to another parent, offered at various times throughout the state. Contact your Regional Coordinator for upcoming dates.

**Call us at 1-800-905-TIES or Visit: [www.massfamilyties.org](http://www.massfamilyties.org)**





## CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER – THIS MEANS YOU

Being a caregiver is never easy. Beyond dealing with medical issues, parents of a child with special needs deal with the emotional well-being of their child and the impact the special need has on the entire family. There is never enough time in life, and you may feel overwhelmed and overworked.

In these circumstances, ***you must take care of yourself***. It's hard to do, but essential – not just for yourself, but also for your child. Remember that to take care of your child, you must maintain and promote your own foundation and well-being so you can continue to manage your child's ongoing challenges. Caring for yourself is, in essence, caring for your child.

As a caregiver, you may feel isolated and find it difficult to share your innermost feelings. However, speaking up is one of the best ways to reduce that feeling of isolation. Caring for your child can become a little easier when you realize that you are not alone in your journey. There are other parents thinking and feeling much the same way you do. As parents of a child with special needs, we cannot change the situation; however, we can change the way we take care of ourselves as we care for our child.

Here are some ways to help yourself:

- ❖ Talk to your friends and maintain friendships
- ❖ Seek and accept the support of others
- ❖ Set goals for yourself, your child and your family
- ❖ Identify and acknowledge your feelings
- ❖ Seek professional counseling when you need it
- ❖ Attend to your own healthcare needs
- ❖ Get enough rest, proper nutrition, and regular exercise
- ❖ Take time off *without feeling guilty*
- ❖ Change the way you view certain situations. Remember with the good comes some bad, and with the bad comes some good.
- ❖ Contact Family TIES of Massachusetts' Parent-to-Parent Program at 800-905-TIES (8437)