

Bright Futures: Family Matters

Building Community Connections

Community - "Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us. . . voices will celebrate with us. . . Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. . . A circle of healing. A circle of friends. . ." - Starhawk



Whenever we embark on a journey, maps help keep us oriented so we don't get lost. Family life is a type of journey. Every day brings new adventures and surprises - some welcome, others not. A map with directions for connecting to community services and supports would help ensure families do not get lost. All families need to access community resources and supports at one time or another. It may be as simple as finding a playgroup for your toddler a sports team for your 5 year old, or a new doctor for your adolescent who no longer wants to see a pediatrician. Sometimes families' needs are more complex, especially if they have a child with special needs. They may need the support of another parent who has a child with similar needs, or help accessing special education services or insurance programs.

Even if we have lived in the same community for many years and know where to shop, bank, and participate in cultural & religious activities, we don't always know how to get to new places. Before we had children, did we know where the schools were? Just as our families and children grow, so does our community. When our children were babies, our community may have included neighbors, playgroups, childcare providers, pediatricians and early intervention services. As our children get older, our community expands to include school, clubs and sports, and after school programs. What happens if our family needs a new service or support, like access to a medical specialist or food stamps? Do we know where to go for the information that will help us find our way?

The Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Library at Georgetown University (www.mchlibrary.info) is a clearinghouse for information about maternal and child health resources. It also includes many non-English resources and materials. See: www.mchlibrary.info/nonenglish.html. In addition to databases, resource guides, and weekly alerts, the MCH library has created a set of knowledge paths. These paths are "road maps" with up-to-date, reliable information. In collaboration with the National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health (see **Partners**), MCH has developed **The Community Services Locator: Locating Community-Based Services to Support Children and Families** knowledge path, a collection of information that can link families to services, supports, and resources in the communities where they live. See: www.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp_community.html

Education/Special Needs - If you have questions and concerns about your child's progress in school, this section provides information about contacting the public school in your community and speaking with the special education director. There are links to national resource centers that provide disability-specific information for each state.

Health & Wellness - Explore primary health services, oral health providers, area hospitals, and more by accessing the "Go Local" feature of MedlinePlus. If you need visiting nurse services or other home health care, learn how to choose the right provider as well as where to locate services in your community.

Mental Health & Well-Being - Is your child's difficult behavior temporary or is there a more serious emotional, behavioral or mental health problem? Learn more and connect with local chapters of children's mental health organizations and learn where to access the national register of mental health providers.

Family Support - At one time or another we all need support in one or more area of our lives. This section provides community connections for family support groups, prevention of child abuse and domestic violence, specific supports for military families, and families with children with special needs. There are also links to marriage counselors when stress takes a toll on our spousal relationships.

Parenting - Our kids don't come with handbooks; it's hard to be sure how to handle some situations. This section has parenting resources; many school related. When parents are active in their children's education, kids do better in school.

Child Care/Early Childhood Education - Learn how to choose childcare and early education programs, check state licensing requirements, and access financial assistance to help defray the costs.

Financial Support - One stop shopping for connecting with community-based information and referral services. Includes eligibility criteria for federal and state assistance programs, including health insurance options.

Family Voices is a national grassroots network of families and friends speaking on behalf of children with special health needs. Our children are also part of the wider world of children. With an Improving Understanding of MCH grant, Family Voices works to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health. **Bright Futures: Family Matters** is a publication to share with your networks. Check out our Family Voices web sites at www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org and www.familyvoices.org.

Partners...

Since 1984, the National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health has worked in partnership with families and other leaders throughout the country. They've studied what works and what doesn't work about the mental health service system and developed a family-friendly, community-based, culturally appropriate system of care for children and adolescents who have, or are at risk for, mental health problems. Using this Systems of Care framework, the Center provides assistance to states, territories, tribes and communities to promote children's emotional, behavioral and mental well-being; prevent mental health problems; provide early intervention, and develop interventions that will improve outcomes for children and their families. For a list of Center activities, on-line resources (English **en Español**), and information especially for families, visit http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/programs/ta_center/index.html or contact: National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development/Georgetown University Box 571485 Washington, DC 20057 (202) 687-5000 (phone) (202) 687-1954 (fax) childrensmh@georgetown.edu



What's new in research?



School Violence - School safety is a measure of community health. Families should be able to send their children to school without worrying that another student might hurt them. Teachers should be able to focus on teaching without worrying about assessing students' behavior for the possibility that they will become "threats to school safety." Harvard clinical researchers studied 33 students with disruptive behaviors. Thirty-two had undiagnosed mental health needs. The researchers found many students who receive disciplinary action in school have undiagnosed mental health needs. They identified barriers to the students' care, and suggested ways to optimize services, including plans for suspended students to return to school. In addition, they developed a checklist that parents and educators can use to flag a child's behaviors early, before they become explosive. This study, "*Beyond Psychopathology: Assessing Seriously Disruptive Students in School Settings*," was published in August 2006 Journal of Pediatrics. Read more at www.hms.harvard.edu/news/pressreleases/cha/0806screening.html.

Tidbits for the Month

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month.

When it comes to helmets, one size does not fit all, or at least, one type of helmet is not appropriate for every type of activity. Helmets prevent head injuries and save lives. Learn why all helmets are not the same, how to tell if a helmet fits properly and other valuable safety information at www.biausa.org/word.files.to.pdf/good.pdfs/which_helmet_for_which_activity.pdf.



MCH Feedback - The Maternal and Child Health Library relies on user feedback to improve their resources, add information to existing knowledge paths, and welcomes suggestions for new paths to create. Share general comments at www.mchlibrary.info/guestbook/addnew.html or provide feedback specifically about the **Community Services Locator** at www.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/feedback.html. In the Contact Information section of each feedback form, even though the name and e-mail address fields are shaded yellow, they are NOT required. You can submit the forms anonymously.

Thank you to all who responded to our request for feedback in the last issue - we appreciate it! If you haven't responded, there's still time. Please visit www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org/feedback.htm to complete a short 10-question survey about this newsletter.

Share your news with others!

We're always looking for news and activities about partner and family organizations and programs. If you have information to share or wish to subscribe, email Betsy Anderson at banderson@familyvoices.org.

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Family Resource Corner



If your child has special health care needs and you need information about state and federal public benefits programs (Medicaid, SSI, S-CHIP) or other community connections, contact the **Family Voices** network member in your state at www.familyvoices.org/states.php.

In times of crisis, it's wonderful when extended family, friends, neighbors and other members of our community offer to pitch in and help out. **Lotsa Helping Hands** at www.lotsahelpinghands.com is a free, web-based organizational tool for assigning and coordinating tasks such as rides to appointments, grocery shopping, preparing meals, or helping with childcare when you are going through a tough time and can't manage everything on your own.

Healthy Roads Media at www.healthyroadsmedia.org realizes people in diverse communities have different learning styles and language needs. They provide 9-1-1 instruction, information about domestic violence, proper use of child safety seats, health conditions & diseases and much more in multiple formats (handouts, audio, visual & multimedia) and languages (including Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Hmong, and others).

Contributing to your community sometimes means the things you don't do, like wasting energy. Visit www.powerisinyourhands.org for energy-saving tips.