# CONNECT WITH SUPPORTS

## Supports for connecting with other families

**CT Family Support Network** ctfsn.org | 1-877-376-2329

**CT Council on Developmental Disabilities** ct.gov/ctcdd | 1-800-653-1134

**PATH - Parent to Parent & Family Voices** pathct.org | 1-800-399-PATH (CT only)

## Other Family Resources

**"Help Me Grow" Infoline (Birth to 5)** infoline.org | 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-7000

**Children & Youth with Special Health Care Needs** ct.gov/dph

**CT Parent Advocacy Center** cpacinc.org | 1-800-445-2722

**Special Education PTA (SEPTA)** Contact your school's Special Education office

**Parent Leadership Training Institute** plti-ct.org |860-240-0290

**Best Buddies** bestbuddies.org | 203-234-3996

**Autism Spectrum Resource Center (ASRC)** autismconnecticut.org | 203-265-5717

**CT Families for Effective Autism Treatment (FEAT)** ctfeat.org | 860-571-3888

This product was developed through the National Community of Practice for Supporting Families of Individuals with I/DD. More at supprotstofamiles.org

WHAT FAMILIES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

# connecting with other families

## What are family connections?

Peer support is the process of matching families with other families

**CT Department of Developmental Services**
ct.gov/dds

**CT Council on Developmental Disabilities**
ct.gov/ctcdd

# FAMILY CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

## What do families need to know about connecting with other families?

Families greatly benefit from the help and support that other families can provide, and from shared information about their child's special needs and knowledge of available resources. With this information, families can make informed decisions about services and support.

### Prenatal & Infancy

When a child is identified with a disability, families should receive accurate information about the diagnosis from their child's physician, then seek opportunities to meet with other families with a child with a similar disability. Families may want to reach out to their town's Social Services Department for information about advocacy and family organizations in the community that can help them along the way.

### Early Childhood

As young children start to interact more in child care and school settings, families want more information related to inclusion and best practice. Families who have access to support groups, networks, and training become informed advocates and better able to proactively address their children's needs. Such supports assist families in the planning for future opportunities. Families may also want to meet other individuals with disabilities in order to promote a positive vision for their child's future.

### School Age

Navigating health care, education, and transitions throughout the school years requires coordination and cooperation with multiple partners and agencies, both non-disability and disability-specific. This includes partnerships with medical providers, school districts, and state disability systems. The more contacts families have with other families in their community, the more opportunities they have for relationships and networks that provide natural supports.

## Transition

It is never too early to address planning for the future. Such planning at the high school level may include post-secondary education, employment, finances, guardianship, and government benefits. Family-to-family connections can be of great importance as a source of information and support during this critical period of change.

## Adulthood

Family members, including siblings, continue to have a critical role in ensuring access and coordination of the supports needed whether the individual is living with them or in their own home. When the adult child moves toward an independent and self-determined life, this may include searching for work, finding a place to call home, choosing friends, and possibly deciding to start his or her own family. Family-to-family connections can be useful in helping to find new connections, to support new adult relationships and to find new ways of supporting adult family members who have a disability.

## Aging

When aging parents and caregivers begin to have care-giving needs of their own, their ability to play an active role in the lives of their grown children is diminished. However, when life-span education and supports to families are in place, including financial planning and planning for the life and supports of their dependent, the primary caregiver can be comforted by good resources. With the continuation of family-to-family connections, aging family members can benefit from the experiences and support of other care-givers also transitioning their role to others who will care for and about their child in the future.