



## Using Children's Literature

To Assist in the Understanding of a Chronic Health Condition or Disability

- ♥ Encourage friendships
- ♥ Teach tolerance
- ♥ Reduce fear
- ♥ Provide correct information
- ♥ Dispel myths and stereotypes
- ♥ Promote understanding

Reading to a child helps them acquire the information and skills they need to succeed in school and life. It allows for questions and conversation beyond the story on the page. Choose a comfortable place where the child can sit near you. Help them feel safe and secure. When children enjoy being read to, they will grow to love books and be eager to learn to read.

Children enjoy learning about their world and are many times more aware of differences around them than we realized. They may have seen another child sitting in a wheelchair, or know of someone who has a chronic health condition. Through the use children's books, a child can learn that all children have strengths, weaknesses, similarities and differences.

### Tips for Using Children's Books About A Chronic Health Condition or Disability

- Read the story to yourself before you read it to your child. By reading it first you become familiar with the characters and can anticipate possible questions. It also gives you an opportunity to adapt words to reflect the terms your family uses such as body parts or bathroom terms.
- If you are using a book with a child that is experiencing a chronic health condition you may want to read for content to be sure it's appropriate for the situation.
- A book doesn't have to be about people. Some of the best books about inclusion, acceptance, or differences use animals or insects in life's situations. Knowledge can be gained from the message the book sends.
- If a child has been diagnosed with a chronic health condition, using a children's book that explains it in terms they can understand may help take away the fear or uncertainty of what it means to their life.
- There are children's books available which depict things children fear (heading to school, the doctors, dentist, hospital, or having a medical procedure). Reading in advance of any of these life events, and having discussions with the child, helps to dispel myths and alleviate fear making for a more positive experience.
- There are also children's books that address healthy activities, such as brushing teeth, washing hands, eating well, etc. These books can encourage good health practices and help children in learning to take care of themselves.
- It's easier for children to reach out in friendship to someone who acts or looks differently if they have been exposed to examples of these differences.
- Choose stories that show kids with disabilities participating in activities familiar to children as well as showing specialized equipment that helps them play like others. Choose books that promote understanding and respect.