FALL 2026

Pass it On

Information to use and share with families and professionals caring for children with special healthcare and education needs from birth to 26



New Hampshire FAMILY VOICES®

603-271-4525 NHFV.org

PARENT INFORMATION Center

603-224-7005 PICNH.org

INSIDE PASS IT ON

3
Nurturing Healthy Social Emotional Development

4
Parent Tips for Monitoring Your Child's Progress

6
Sam's Book Picks for Fall 2026

8
Ways to Support Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

9
Tips from Natalie Safley

10
Planning for Your Future: Transition Tips from the YEAH Council

11
Parent Advocacy – Your Voice Matters

12
From Pediatric to Adult Health Care

13
Parent-Teacher Conferences: Guide for Parents

14
Fostering Positive Peer Interactions

This publication is made possible by funding from NHDHHS, Bureau of Family-Centered Services (Title V, Social Security Act). Opinions, activities, products and publications mentioned are for informational purposes only and do not imply endorsement by NHDHHS, Bureau of Family-Centered Services. NHDHHS does not discriminate in its activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability. This publication is not intended to provide medical advice on personal health matters. All health concerns should be discussed directly with your physician. Permission is granted to quote from this publication, while giving credit to Pass It On, a publication of NH Family Voices and the Parent Information Center of NH (and original author, if appropriate). Some material may carry other copyrights as well (noted where appropriate) and cannot be reprinted. For more information, email ewoodward@picnh.org.

Happy Fall from Pass It On!

As the leaves change and pumpkin spice season arrives, we're excited to bring you this issue of *Pass It On*! With kids back in school and settling into their routines, it's the perfect time to share resources, tips, and information to help families navigate the school year and beyond.

In this issue, we explore a variety of topics, including transitioning to adult health care, planning for the future, supporting children's social-emotional development, advocating for your child at school, and helping Deaf and Hard of Hearing children prepare for preschool.

Have you checked out the **PIC Family Voices Podcast** yet? New episodes are released every two weeks and cover topics such as health care, transitions, early childhood, and life after high school. Be sure to listen and share with your networks!

As always, **NH Family Voices and the Parent Information Center (PIC) are here to support you and your family.** Whether you have questions about health care or need support navigating education, please reach out. We're here to help!

Wishing you and your family a happy, healthy fall!

Kindly,

Michelle Lewis
Executive Director, Parent Information Center (PIC)

Sylvia Pelletier
Director, NH Family Voices (NHFV)



Nurturing Healthy Social Emotional Development

By Carly Ireland

Social emotional development is a term families and professionals are hearing more often (and for good reason). In a world that feels busier and more complex every day, many caregivers are taking a closer look at how children's surroundings shape their behavior, well being, and overall growth.

So what do we mean by social and emotional development? And does it differ from the developmental milestones parents usually monitor?

Social emotional development describes how children learn to understand their feelings, express them in healthy ways, build relationships, and engage with the world around them. These abilities begin forming at birth and continue to grow over time through warm, responsive interactions with the adults that care for them.

At its heart, social emotional development is about connection. When children feel connected, they gain a sense of security that helps them in relating to others and gives them confidence in handling the ups and downs of everyday life. These foundational social skills are developed through simple, yet meaningful ways… such as: cuddling, laughing together, being comforted when upset, through reciprocal play, and by watching how adults manage their own emotions and relationships. Even newborns begin developing social skills at birth by responding to familiar voices, mimicking facial expressions, and forming attachment with caregivers.

As children continue to learn and grow, they gradually become more confident in expressing themselves, managing their big feelings, and building positive and meaningful relationships of their own. Every child develops at their own pace, but it's important to remember that nurturing, supportive relationships at home will help children feel safe, understood, and ready to learn.

If you would like a closer look into your child's social emotional development, Watch Me Grow at NHFV is here to help. We offer the Social Emotional Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ:SE-2), which give families a clearer picture of their child's social-emotional strengths, as well as where they may need more support. We also provide family friendly resources and activity ideas to help you foster a healthy social emotional environment at home and through your everyday interactions with your child!

To learn more, reach out to our Developmental Screening Coordinator, Carly, at cri@nhfv.org.

Supporting Your Child's Development from Birth through Early Childhood

Every child grows at their own pace and in their own unique way. Did you know that there are fast and fun activities to help you track and promote your child's growth and development?

Understanding & Monitoring Your Child's Development

Developmental Milestones are simple everyday moments (like smiling, babbling, waving, or stacking blocks) that show how your child is building new skills and discovering the world around them.

Monitoring Milestones helps you observe your child's developmental progress over time and identify concerns early.

Learn more about milestones:
Learn the Signs. Act Early.

Developmental Screening is a formal tool used to give a snapshot of your child's growth, showing strengths and areas where they may need support. It can be done by caregivers or professionals in many settings.



Early support makes a big difference, and you are not alone in the process!

New Hampshire FAMILY VOICES®

Watch Me Grow

Ensuring Your Child's Brightest Future



Ask your child's primary care provider.

Contact your local Family Resource Center to ask about screenings or resources.

Have a concern about your child's development?

Contact NH Family Voices Watch Me Grow to request an Ages and Stages screening tool.

If your child is in a childcare program, ask if they have screenings available.

Ask for a **Learn the Signs. Act Early.** checklist for monitoring milestones at your WIC appointment.

Share concern with your child's doctor.

Ask about an evaluation you can self refer through:

Birth to 3: Family Centered Early Supports and Services

or

Your local Schools' Special Education Department (3 and up)

Contact NH Family Voices for family support and guidance on next steps.

nhfamilyvoices@nhfv.org
www.nhfv.org
603-271-4525

New Hampshire FAMILY VOICES®

Parent Tips for Monitoring Your Child's Progress

By Maureen Shields

1. Know the IEP Goals
- Read each goal carefully.
- Ask for clarification if the goal is confusing.
- Make sure goals are specific and measurable.
- Understand how progress will be measured.

2. Review Progress Reports Regularly
- Compare updates to the annual goal.
- Look for steady growth over time.
- Ask for examples of work or data that support the reported progress.
- Keep copies of all reports

3. Stay Organized & Create a folder for:
- IEPs
- Evaluations
- Progress reports
- Report cards
- Work samples
- Communication with school staff

4. Collect Your Own Information
- Save homework and classwork samples.
- Note changes in behavior, independence, or skills at home.
- Keep a simple log of concerns and successes.
- Document important conversations and meetings.

5. Ask Questions About Data
- What data is being collected?
- How often is it collected?
- Who is collecting it?
- Is the intervention evidence-based?
- What does the data show about growth?

6. Monitor Progress Between Meetings
- Don't wait until the annual IEP meeting.
- Request updates if you have concerns.
- Schedule check-ins with teachers or service providers.
- Celebrate progress, even small gains.

7. If Progress Is Limited
- Ask why progress is not occurring.
- Review whether services and supports are being implemented as written in the IEP.
- Consider additional evaluations if needed.
- Discuss revising goals, accommodations, or instructional approaches.

8. Work as a Team

- Maintain positive communication with educators.
- Share information from home that may affect learning.
- Focus on problem-solving and collaboration.
- Remember that parents are important members of the IEP team.

Key Takeaway

Progress monitoring is not just about collecting data—it is about using data to make decisions that help your child learn, grow, and succeed. Parents who understand and track progress are better equipped to advocate for their child's needs.





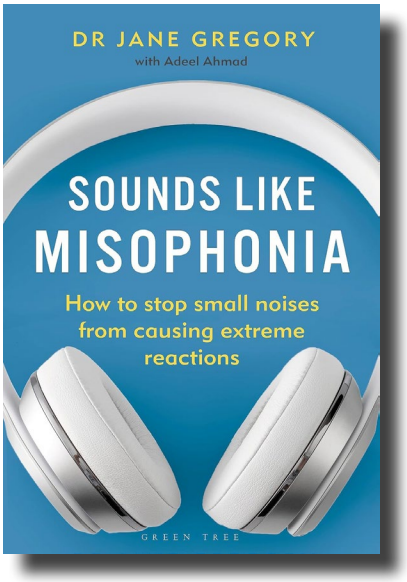
Don't Miss Out on the Parent Information Center (PIC) Volunteer Advocate Training Program!

Registration Opens November 2!

https://picnh.org/volunteer-advocate-training-program/

Parent Information Center

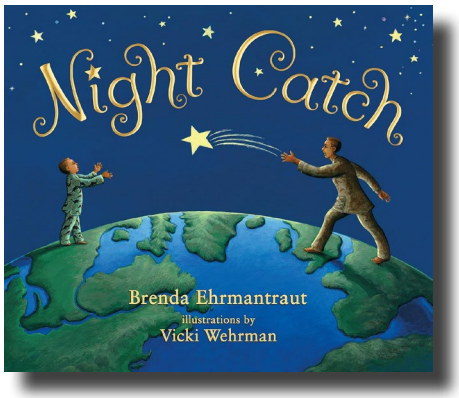
New Hampshire FAMILY VOICES® Lending Library



Sounds Like Misophonia: How to Stop Small Noises from Causing Extreme Reactions
By Dr. Jane Gregory

If sounds can send you spiraling, you may have experienced misophonia. In fact, it's thought that one in five of us have it. Sounds Like Misophonia is the first dedicated guide to help you make sense of the condition and design a treatment plan that works for you.

Using techniques from cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), clinical psychologist Dr Jane Gregory takes you through step-by-step exercises to change your relationship with sounds and streamline your coping strategies. Alongside you on your journey is podcaster and misophonia expert Adeel Ahmad, who carries out experiments and shares case studies from volunteers around the world.



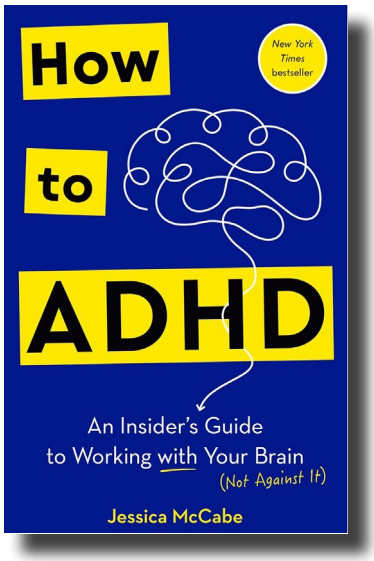
Night Catch
By Brenda Ehrmantraut

When a soldier's work takes him half-way around the world, he enlists the help of the North Star for a nightly game of catch with his son.

Night Catch is a timeless story that connects families while they are apart and offers comforting hope for their reunion.

"Night Catch is my favorite book to read with my two girls when daddy is away. We are BIG FANS!" — Tara E Crooks, Cofounder, Army Wife Network

This book is great for children ages 4-8.

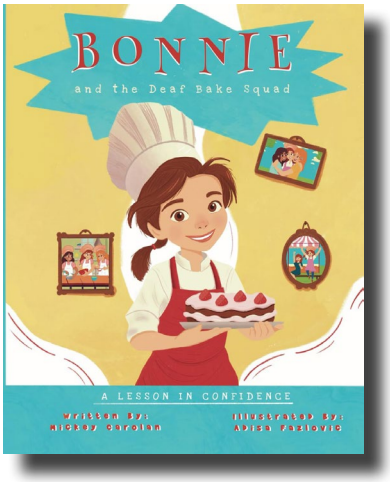


How to ADHD: An Insider's Guide to Working with Your Brain (Not Against It)
By Jessica McCabe

In How to ADHD, Jessica reveals the tools that have changed her life while offering an unflinching look at the realities of living with ADHD. She explains how ADHD affects everyday life, covering executive function impairments, rejection sensitivity, difficulties with attention regulation, and more. You'll also find ADHD-specific strategies for adapting your environment, routines, and systems.

With quotes from Jessica's online community, chapter summaries, and reading shortcuts designed for the neurodivergent reader, How to ADHD will help you recognize your strengths and challenges, tackle "bad brain days," and be kinder to yourself in the process.

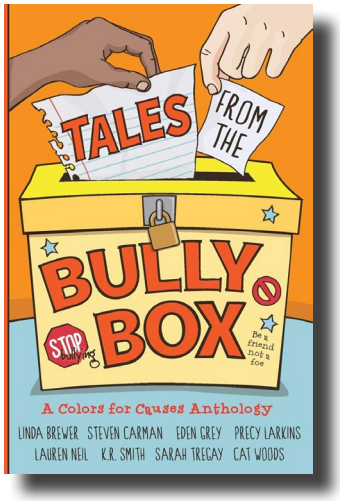
Bonnie and the Deaf Bake Squad: A Lesson in Confidence
By Mickey Carolan



Born Deaf, Bonnie has never let her physical disability hinder her dreams. Supported by her loving and compassionate friends from the renowned Michigan School for the Deaf, Bonnie dives headfirst into preparing her show-stopping entry for the prestigious Tuscola County Fair. With unwavering determination and a sprinkle of creativity, Bonnie puts her heart and soul into each delectable creation, all the while proving that being Deaf is no barrier to success.

Yet, as the competition draws nearer, Bonnie's excitement is tinged with doubts and fears. Will she be able to stand tall against her hearing peers? The pressure seems insurmountable, but that's when the incredible Deaf Bake Squad steps in to lend their unwavering support. As a tight-knit group of talented bakers, they become Bonnie's pillar of strength, reminding her that her abilities know no bounds.

This book is ideal for children ages 3-9 and Pre K-3rd grade.



Tales from the Bully Box
By Cat Woods

Bullying stinks, but knowing what to do about it can make things better. In Tales from the Bully Box, you will find short stories about kids just like you. They get bullied, and sometimes they even bully. But most of the time, they are bystanders who have to figure out what to do when they witness the bullying all around them.

Hi! I'm Sam Collyar, a Resource Specialist at NH Family Voices. Outside of work, I'm a wife, mom, and pet mom to 3 dogs, a cat, and 21 chickens. I keep busy in my garden and love books. My passion for books really kicked off when my then-eight-year-old was diagnosed with cancer, and we saw just how much hope could hide in the pages of a book. We turned to books for knowledge and stories from others in our shoes a lot, and I'm so excited to be in a position to connect people with books from our FREE Lending Library that could provide that same level of knowledge and comfort.



If you are looking for a specific book or resource on a particular topic, email me at **snc@nhfv.org**!

Borrowing from the NHFV Lending Library is Easy and FREE for NH Residents!



Call 603-271-4525 or go to nhfv.org/how-we-can-help/lending-library/



Search thousands of books by subject

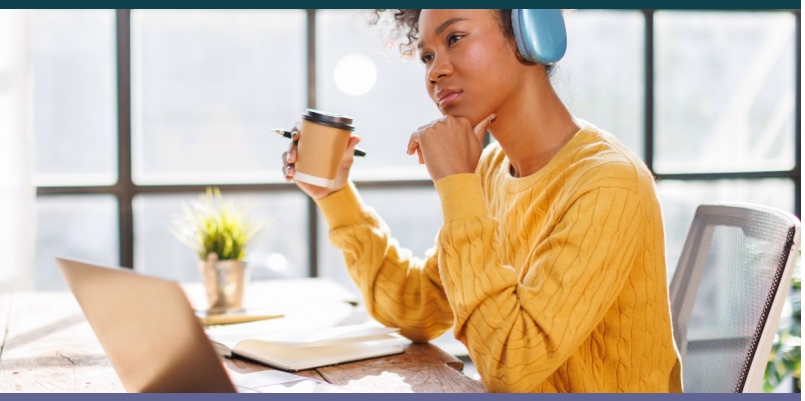


Add the book(s) you like to your cart and fill out the delivery form



Books will be delivered to your home or office with a prepaid postage envelope for you to return them when you're finished!

Parent Information Center/ NH Family Voices Podcast Series



Parent Information Center and New Hampshire Family Voices have launched the PIC/Family Voices Podcast, a space for families of children and youth with disabilities and special health care needs to help you navigate this journey.

It's not always easy! We're here to help.

Listen on our websites or wherever podcasts are available

Episodes Include:

- Why Family Voice Matters: Family Leadership in Early Childhood Systems
- Understanding Paid Caregiving
- Educational Options and Rights for Children with Disabilities
- An Introduction to Discipline and Manifestation Determination Meetings



Don't forget to like, subscribe and rate so more families can find the resources they need!

New Hampshire FAMILY VOICES®

PARENT INFORMATION Center

A PODCAST OF THE PARENT INFORMATION CENTER AND NEW HAMPSHIRE FAMILY VOICES

Ways to Support Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children as They Prepare for Preschool

By Joanne Grobecker

Starting preschool is a big transition for all families. For parents of children starting preschool who are deaf or hard of hearing, that transition can come with additional questions and concerns.

Families often wonder what the school day will look like. Who will make sure hearing aids don't fall off or get lost? What happens if a microphone doesn't sync with cochlear implants and the child doesn't tell the teacher? How will parents know how their child's day went if the child cannot yet communicate that information at home?

These are valid questions, and many of which are addressed before school begins through the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. During IEP meetings, families and school staff work together to determine the supports and services a child will receive to ensure access to learning.

To learn more about how families can successfully navigate this milestone, I spoke with Natalie Safley, Family Outreach Coordinator at Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing, who shared the following tips to help families feel more confident and supported during this transition.



Tips from Natalie Safley

Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- **Remember that the process becomes easier over time.** The first IEP meeting can feel confusing and overwhelming simply because it is new. As your child continues through school, you'll become more familiar with the process, paperwork, and terminology, making future meetings more manageable.
- **Read the Parent Safeguards Handbook.** This resource helps families understand their rights and introduces common special education terms and acronyms.
- **Take notes during IEP meetings.** After the meeting, the school will provide a Written Prior Notice. Be sure it accurately reflects your understanding of the decisions made. In New Hampshire, families have 14 days to sign special education documents.
- **Invite the right people to the IEP meeting.** When it comes to language access, families are encouraged to "cast a wide net" and invite all potentially relevant team members at the start. As your child grows and their needs change, the team can be adjusted.
- **Include daily listening checks in the IEP.** It's essential that amplification equipment is checked every day to ensure your child has full access to language. This should include a sound check (such as the Ling test), with results recorded and kept in the classroom. Listening checks should confirm access to all sounds—not just "Can you hear me?"
- **Ensure necessary school equipment is maintained.** Schools are required to provide what your child needs to access their education during the school day, and make sure it's maintained.
- **Create a feedback loop between home and school.** Regular communication helps families understand what's happening at school and allows skills to be reinforced at home. This might look like a notebook that travels between home and school, or a shared Google document where teachers, providers, and families can share updates.
- **Practice the preschool routine ahead of time.** Help your child prepare by touring the school, looking at photos, drawing pictures, or reading social stories about preschool. Even if you're feeling nervous, try to show excitement—children often pick up on that energy and feel more confident themselves.
- **Support social connections.** Ask the school about connecting with other families or share your contact information so playdates can be arranged outside of school. It's okay to put yourself out there—building relationships can make a big difference for both children and parents.
- **Maintain a positive, collaborative mindset.** As a parent, you know your child best, and it's natural to feel protective when making decisions about their education. Remember that you and the school team share the same goal: helping your child succeed. When disagreements arise, try curiosity instead of confrontation. Asking questions like, "Can you tell me more about why this approach was chosen?" or "What would this look like in the classroom?" helps keep the focus on collaboration. As an equal member of the IEP team, your voice matters.



Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing supports families of school-aged children, including preschoolers, through its Education & Resource Center. The organization provides direct services, programs, and resources and serves as a vital bridge connecting families to the supports their children need. For more information about the Education & Resource Center, visit: https://ndhhs.org/erc-services-and-programs/.

For more information for deaf and hard of hearing families, listen to Episode 22 of the PIC Family Voices Podcast, and discover the role of Hands and Voices in supporting families and how to navigate early intervention and education systems. Find all of our podcast episodes at https://picnh.org/podcast-2/.

Planning for Your Future: Transition Tips from the YEAH Council

By Keagan Watson in collaboration with YEAH Council Members

The YEAH Council is a group of individuals ages 14-26 with health conditions and disabilities. If you are interested in joining or know someone interested, contact the YEAH Council NH inbox at yeahnh1@gmail.com.

This month, the team chose to focus on preparing for your IEP meeting and advocating for your needs. When preparing for an IEP meeting, council members recommend the following:

- **Prepare for your meeting.**
- **Attend your IEP meeting.** It is important for youth to participate in their own meetings and have a voice in the decisions being made about their education.
- **If you do not feel comfortable attending**, consider completing a Strengths and Weaknesses chart and making a list of goals you would like to work on during the school year. You can also make sure a trusted adult attends the meeting and can speak up about your wishes and goals.



An IEP must be reviewed at least once a year, and a youth receiving special education must be reevaluated at least once every three years. However, an IEP meeting can be requested at any time, and the school has a set number of days to convene the meeting.

Did you know that the IEP team is required to include a general education teacher, a special education teacher, a parent or guardian, and a district representative, such as an administrator or Local Education Agency (LEA) representative? Beyond these required members, the youth, parent, or guardian can request that anyone with specific knowledge or expertise related to the youth participate in the meeting. This could include a doctor, health care coordinator, advocate, or vocational rehabilitation counselor. These individuals can help provide a more complete picture of the youth's experiences, strengths, needs, and journey with a disability.

In New Hampshire, transition planning is required to be included in a youth's IEP beginning at age 14. This is an important part of the IEP because it helps youth begin planning for life after high school, including their future education, employment, and independent living goals.

The YEAH Council would also like to mention that the Summary of Performance (SOP) sheet you receive at the end of a special education program upon graduation can be useful because it provides a description of where you are now and where you are coming from. This information can be especially helpful if a youth has difficulty communicating their challenges or needs. However, it is important to note that if a youth goes on to college, the SOP cannot be accepted as proof of a disability or guarantee accommodations. In college, students are protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and may need to provide additional documentation to receive accommodations.

There is no shame in asking for help. Team members are there to support you and have your best interests at heart. Self-advocacy, although challenging at times, is a necessary part of transition, and advocating at your IEP meeting is one of those steps on the self-advocacy journey. Follow YEAH Council Instagram at @yeahcouncil for more self-advocacy tips and all things transition.

YEAH COUNCIL

Parent Advocacy – Your Voice Matters

By Bonnie Dunham and Heidi Duprey



Parents are their child's first and most important advocate; you are their cheerleader.

Advocating is making others aware of your child's needs, along with their strengths, participating in problem-solving, and working with others to make decisions.

When Congress passed the federal special education law, they recognized that parents have an important and unique role in their children's education. As a parent, you know your child's strengths, challenges, interests and goals, and their developmental, educational and medical history. You know what motivates them, what has been tried before, what worked and what did not.

That is why the Federal and State special education laws include requirements that support parent involvement, making them equal members of the individualized education program (IEP) that makes all of the key decisions in the special education process.

Here are a few simple strategies to help you become a more effective advocate:

1. **Put everything in writing.** Having a written record of requests and decisions reduces the likelihood of a misunderstanding. It can also help your track child's progress or follow up on concerns. One resource is the sample letters on PIC's website. PIC staff sometimes say, "If it's not in writing, it didn't happen".
2. **Be well-organized.** Create an organizational system of your child's evaluations, IEPs, progress reports, etc. so that you can quickly locate and use those records to identify and address issues your child may be having. PIC's website includes several organizational tools that can get you started. That data informs the decisions you need to make for your child's education. In addition to evaluations, work samples, and teacher's notes, data could include a "homework diary" that documents whether homework is being completed, how long it takes, and how much help your child needed from you.
3. **Use effective communication.** Whether you are sharing information or asking questions, effective communication lets you work with other members of the IEP team to monitor your child's progress and raise concerns. Effective communication means being clear and respectful, staying on-topic, and listening to what others have to say. Presume positive intentions.
4. **Take your time.** You never have to agree to anything at a meeting (parents have 14 days to sign special education documents, including a proposed IEP). You can also ask questions or for clarification before agreeing to a proposal.
5. **Keep on learning.** You can find resources, tools, sample letters and free in-person and remote trainings that can help you to become a more informed and effective advocate on PIC's website.
6. **Take care of yourself.** Advocating for your child can be immensely rewarding. It can also be emotionally draining, so be sure to take time for yourself and practice stress management strategies. Connecting with other parents is a great way to both give and get support.

From Pediatric to Adult Health Care: Preparing for a Successful Transition with Complex Needs

By Kaitlyn Gorman

Health care transition, is defined as "the process of moving from a child/family-centered model of health care to an adult/patient-centered model of health care, with or without transferring to a new clinician."

All youth will experience healthcare transitions. As they move from pediatric to adult care, the way their healthcare is managed will change. While this can be challenging for anyone, youth with complex needs face additional barriers and are at higher risk for significant gaps in care.

Complex needs such as developmental delays, non-verbal communication, cognitive impairments or medical needs, requires additional time and attention to ensure continuity of care and preparing the youth. Beginning this transition early helps break the process down in smaller, more manageable steps.

Youth seeing multiple specialists, communication between pediatric and adult providers is especially important to ensure continuity and prevent gaps in care.
While the logistics of healthcare transition are important, we also want to acknowledge and prioritize self advocacy and independence for youth with complex conditions.

As you prepare for this transition, consider the following questions:

- What accommodations or assistive technology can best support youth in reaching their level of independence?
- Do they understand their condition, medications or allergies in a way that is appropriate for their level of understanding?
- What is one part of their healthcare they could manage independently and what supports would help them succeed?

These are just some examples of ways to increase self advocacy, self empowerment and autonomy for the youth or young adult.

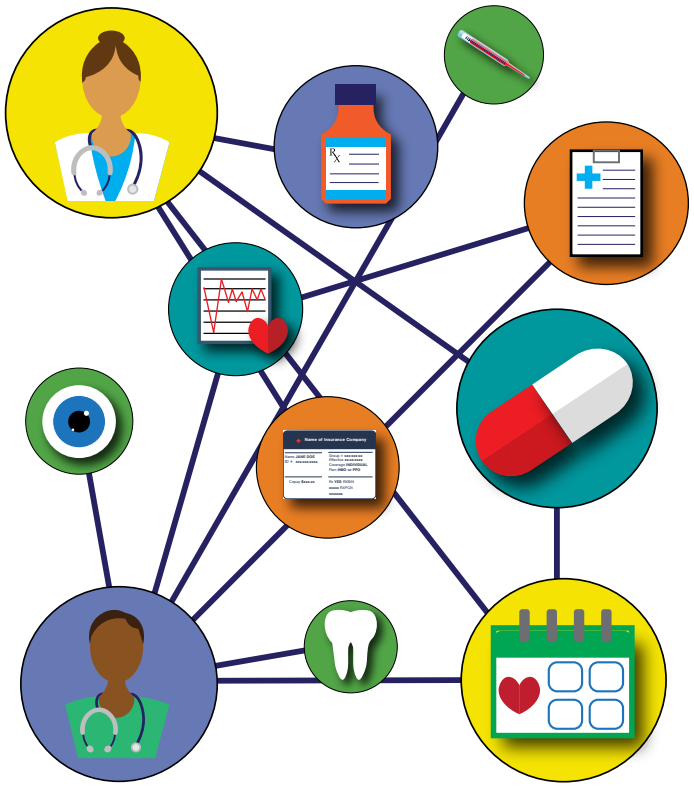
Creating an "About Me" Page

An "About Me" page can help new adult providers understand the patient as a whole, moving beyond just their medical diagnosis. Youth and caregivers should create, update, and share this document with providers.

This page may include:

- Communication needs and preferences
- Sensory sensitivities or environmental triggers
- Important health Information
- Accommodations needed during visits

Navigating this transition from pediatric to adult healthcare can feel overwhelming especially for youth with complex needs. The goal is to create a supportive environment to support their independence and quality of care. Early preparation can make the transition more manageable and help youth and young adults become more involved in their own health care.



Helpful Resources

- New Hampshire Family Voices Healthcare Transition Resources: https://nhfv.org/resources/health-transition-resources/
- Youth for Education, Advocacy, and Healthcare (YEAH) https://nhfv.org/get-involved/youth-involvement/
- Got Transition offers tools and resources for parents, caregivers, youth, and young adults to support the transition from pediatric to adult health care. https://www.gottransition.org/

Parent-Teacher Conferences: Guide for Parents

By Andrea Canter, PhD, NCSP with permission from Child Mind Institute

Research shows that when parents and teachers work together, students often earn better grades, perform better on tests, attend school regularly, behave better, and develop positive attitudes toward learning. Although collaboration can be challenging, a trusting partnership benefits everyone.

Parent-teacher conferences are opportunities to communicate, address concerns, and work together to support a child's success, regardless of past school experiences, cultural differences or language barriers.

Preparing for the Parent-Teacher Conference

- **Gather records:** Bring report cards, test scores, health records, and previous school communications.
- **Talk with your child:** Explain the purpose of the meeting and ask about any concerns they have.
- **Review school policies:** Read the student handbook, especially rules about behavior and attendance.
- **Check homework:** Know whether assignments are completed and if your child finds them too easy or difficult.
- **Prepare questions:** Ask about academic progress, behavior, strengths, friendships, and ways to support learning at home and school.
- **Understand your rights:** If special education is a concern, learn about your rights and available resources.
- **Be open to collaboration:** Stay calm, listen to the teacher's concerns, and focus on finding solutions rather than assigning blame.

During the Conference

- **Listen and take notes:** Record important information to review later or share with others.
- **Share your perspective:** Discuss your child's strengths, challenges, and behavior at home.
- **Ask about strengths:** Find out what your child does well and thank the teacher for their efforts.
- **Ask questions:** Request clarification about unfamiliar terms, test results, or school programs.
- **Work together:** Focus on practical steps that both home and school can take to help your child succeed.

Remember: Parent-teacher conferences are opportunities to build a positive partnership. Open communication, mutual respect, and teamwork can help children thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Read the full article at https://childmind.org/article/parent-teacher-conferences-guide-for-parents/.



Fostering Positive Peer Interactions for Children with Special Healthcare Needs

By Keri Brand

As fall sets in, many of us have started to settle into the new school year and the new routines. Students are getting to know new classmates and becoming reacquainted with others. For children with special healthcare needs, however, building and maintaining those peer relationships can sometimes require additional planning and support.

New Hampshire Family Voices recently had the opportunity to check in with the amazing staff of the Amoskeag Health Complex Care Network about ways that families and supporters of students with complex medical needs can help foster positive peer interactions. Staff at Amoskeag first provided an overview of the kinds of challenges that can make interacting with peers difficult at times and provided some tips and solutions for us to share for each.

Families and professionals who work with children with complex medical needs emphasize that inclusion often begins with identifying and removing barriers to participation. Physical access is one important consideration. Long hallways, stairs, uneven surfaces and inaccessible playground equipment can make it difficult for children who use wheelchairs, walkers or other mobility supports to join their peers in the places where informal interactions happen. Advocating at IEP or 504 meetings for schools to provide accessible routes, improve playground surfaces and acquire adaptive equipment can make a meaningful difference.

The presence of a one-to-one aide, nurse or other support person may also affect social interactions. While this support can be essential for safety and medical needs, adults can sometimes unintentionally become a barrier between a child and their peers. When appropriate, support staff can "fade back" during social activities, redirect questions to the child and help facilitate interactions rather than speaking for the child.

Medical equipment can also attract attention or draw questions from classmates. Simple, age-appropriate explanations can help peers understand equipment such as wheelchairs, braces, feeding tubes or oxygen. Giving children their own language to explain what they use—and helping them learn how to ask for assistance—can give them greater control over how others understand them.

Activities may need to be adapted as well. Recess and physical education can move quickly, and children who need extra time for transitions or equipment adjustments can easily be left behind. Modifying games so everyone can participate, pre-teaching activities and allowing additional transition time can promote inclusion of all children. Social connection doesn't always have to depend on physical activities. Parents can look for community opportunities that match their child's interests, abilities and comfort level, including art, music, theater, libraries, board games, movies, museums, adaptive sports and other group activities. Finding peers with similar interests or abilities can help children participate successfully and build meaningful friendships.

Finally, parents don't have to navigate these challenges alone. Connecting with other families, sharing practical strategies and helping other parents understand what a child needs in order to spend time with their child can open doors to playdates, outings and community activities.

Ultimately, fostering peer relationships is about creating opportunities for children to be with others, recognizing what they can do, removing unnecessary barriers and helping them find communities where they can participate, contribute and belong.





Caregiver Conversations

A Series for Parents & Caregivers of Children with Disabilities & Special Healthcare Needs

Whether you join one conversation or all six, you will leave feeling heard, energized, and better equipped for the journey ahead. Come as you are; together, we create connections that strengthen us all.

Join us via Zoom the second Wednesday of the month November through June!

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/M9LUMgZYSwGOLLwCrcHvDg#/registration

One-hour sessions at either 11:30 am or 6:30 pm

- **Build real community** and meet others who "get it," exchange ideas, and grow a network you can lean on.
- **Share practical strategies & resources** from personal well-being tips to navigating services, each session offers tools you can use right away.
- **Show up on your schedule!** Register once, attend when you can.

Monthly Topics

November - Open Discussion
December - Engaging Kids in their Care
January - Open Discussion
February - Handling the Hard
March - Open Discussion
April - Celebrating the Wins
May - Open Discussion
June - Connections and Our Community



8282
NHDHHS/SMS
NH Family Voices
129 Pleasant St. Thayer Bldg.
Concord, NH 03301

Return Service Requested

PRST. STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Concord, NH
PERMIT # 1478

Effective December 2, 2026 NH Family Voices mailing address will be:
NH Family Voices
17 Ash St.
Concord, NH 03301

Pass it On

Is a FREE Publication from

New Hampshire FAMILY VOICES®
603-271-4525
NHFV.org

PARENT INFORMATION Center
603-224-7005
PICNH.org

To recieve your Free Copy,
simply scan the QR code and fill out the form,

Or go to: https://nhfv.org/newsletter/

Parent Information Center/ NH Family Voices Podcast Series

Listen on our websites or wherever podcasts are available

Recent Episodes:

- An Introduction to Occupational Therapy
- Understanding Educational Options and Rights for Children with Disabilities
- Understanding Paid Caregiving: PCA, LNA and Stipend Options Explained
- IEP Teams and Supports for students with Visual Impairments

Don't forget to like, subscribe and rate so more families can find the resources they need!

