

# Research Highlights

## Topic: Parent to Parent

Santelli, B., Turnbull, A., Sergeant, J., Marquis, J.G., & Lerner, E.P. (1996). Parent to Parent programs: Parent preferences for supports. *Infants and Young Children*, 9(1), 53-62.

### BOTTOM LINE

Regardless of the age of the child or the severity of the child's disability, parents reported on surveys that they preferred the following supports:

- Emotional support—having someone to listen and understand
- Information support—having information about the disability, finding and getting services, living with and caring for the child, and accessing community resources
- Other program supports—having group meetings for either emotional or educational support.

### TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Contact local Parent to Parent programs to receive emotional and informational support from a veteran parent.
- Communicate clearly to staff the specific needs of your family.
- Share your experiences and knowledge as a veteran parent of a child with a disability. Your support is valuable.

### TIPS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Do not assume families “fit” into a specific category for support needs. Take time to find out the family-specific needs in matching them with a veteran family and providing support.
- Recognize how critically important it is to the majority of parents to have emotional support in the form of having someone to listen and understand and to have informational support in the form of finding out relevant information about disability issues.

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## KEY FINDINGS

- Regardless of the age of their child with a disability, two-thirds of the parents ranked having someone to listen and understand as a preferred emotional support.
- Two emotional supports, help in feeling less alone and problem-solving support, were preferred by more parents of older children (six or older) than parents of younger children.
- Over 46% of parents, regardless of the age of their child, preferred the following informational supports: receiving information about the disability, living with and caring for the child, finding and getting the best possible help for the family member with a disability, and information about community resources and services for the family.
- Approximately two-thirds of all parents, regardless of severity of the disability, ranked someone to listen and understand as important.
- Receiving information about the disability was important to the greatest number of parents whose children have mild or moderate disabilities.
- The greatest percentage of parents of children with severe disabilities ranked information about living with and caring for the child, respite care, and financial assistance as important.
- All parents ranked group meetings as important, whereas, parents of children with severe disabilities ranked a telephone warm-line as important.
- The greatest difference in how parents ranked supports were between parents of young children with mild disabilities and parents of young children with severe disabilities. Dealing with stress and problem-solving support was ranked as important by almost twice as many parents of young children with severe disabilities as the parents of children with mild disabilities.

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## METHOD

- A written survey completed by 240 parents participating in Parent to Parent programs.
- These parents represented a random sample of parents from 190 Parent to Parent programs nationally.

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RELATED  
PUBLICATIONS

- Bailey, D.B., Blasco, P.M., & Simmeonsson, R.J. (1992). Needs expressed by mothers and fathers of young children with disabilities. *American Journal of Mental Retardation*, 97, 1-10.
- Santelli, B., Turnbull, A., Marquis, J., & Lerner, E. (1995). Parent to Parent programs: A unique form of mutual support. *Infants and Young Children*, 8(2), 48-57.
- Ainbinder, J., Blanchard, L., Singer, G.H.S., Sullivan, M., Powers, L., Marquis, J., & Santelli, B. (1998). How parents help one another: A qualitative study of Parent to Parent self-help. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 23, 99-109.
- Santelli, B., Poyadue, F., & Young, J. (2001). *The Parent to Parent handbook: Connecting families of children with special needs*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Singer, G.H.S., Marquis, J., Powers, L., Blanchard, L., DiVenere, N., Santelli, B., & Sharp, M. (1999). A multi-site evaluation of Parent to Parent programs for parents of children with disabilities. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 22(3), 217-229.

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