



SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2010

Table of Contents

Save the Dates for...	
*2001 Information and Resource Conference	
*Holiday Ice-Skating Party	
*Kaiser Permanente 1/2 Marathon	
*Office Warming Party	1
Washington Update	2
Meet the Board: Kelly McRory	2
Sexuality Education	3
Talking with Children About Disabilities	4
Parent Mentor Training	4
PULL-OUT SECTION	5-8
CAC report on SFUSD Special Ed Audit	9
Challenger Baseball	9
SFCD Halloween Party	10
Thank You!	11
SFCD Board & Staff	12

Support for Families of Children with Disabilities is a nonprofit, support, resource and networking organization for families of children with special needs and the professionals who work with them. All services are free of charge including resources, phone-line, drop-in center, support groups, workshops & family gatherings.



SAVE THE DATE!!

Saturday, March 19, 2011

2011 Information and Resource Conference

A free conference for families of children with disabilities, the professionals who work with them, and the community at large.
John O'Connell High School, 2355 Folsom Street, San Francisco

MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW!

HOLIDAY ICE-SKATING PARTY for Families of Children with Disabilities

Saturday, December 18, 2010 - 6 pm to 8 pm

Yerba Buena Ice Skating Center - 750 Folsom Street (Between 3rd & 4th Streets on the rooftop of the Moscone Center)

Skates, refreshments and a holiday gift are provided to each child, and wheelchairs are welcome on the ice! Call (415) 920-5040 to register. Please tell us the number of adults and children with each child's gender and age. Registration for this event began on Nov. 1st, so space is limited. If the event is full, we will place your family on the waitlist. \$10 suggested donation per person. All services and events, even childcare, are always free. With the demand for services greater than ever, your donations help make this possible.



Get Out and Run or Walk for Support for Families!



Register now for the Kaiser Permanente San Francisco Half Marathon and 5K Fun Run. Proceeds benefit Support for Families.

Sunday, February 6, 2011
8 am in Golden Gate Park.

Register at: <http://xnet.kp.org/sanfrancisco/>

Ask your friends, relatives and colleagues to sponsor your run or walk. It's a great motivator!

You're Invited!

Office-Warming and Donor & Volunteer Appreciation Party

Join us to see our new office space, and recognize our donors, volunteers and supporters. A special thank you this year will go to everyone who helped make the move a success!

Thursday, January 20, 2011

4 - 7 pm

1663 Mission Street
7th floor

San Francisco, CA 94103

Enjoy light refreshments
and great company!



Washington Update

The health care reform law, known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA), provides a number of benefits of special interest to Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) and their families. Some of the most important ones went into effect on September 23, 2010. For insurance plan/policy years beginning on or after that date, most insurers will no longer be able to:

- deny coverage to children under age 19 who have pre-existing conditions,
- impose lifetime limits on coverage,
- impose annual dollar limits exceeding specified amounts for “essential benefits,” or
- rescind policies in the absence of fraud or intentional misrepresentation.

In addition, the law provides protections concerning

- appeals of insurance companies’ decisions, and
- payment for out-of-network emergency room care.

Another provision that went into effect in September includes the availability of parental insurance coverage for adult children up to age 26.

It should be cautioned that there are some limitations to these protections. For example, some insurance plans – e.g., those sold on the individual market that were in effect when the law was enacted (March 23, 2010) – are not subject to the consumer protections, and the annual limit restrictions may still be too low for children who need very expensive care (although all annual limits are prohibited as of 2014). In addition, it is not clear whether the dollar-limit prohibitions are applicable to limits on services (e.g., caps on number of visits).

But the benefits of the law are nonetheless substantial. In addition to those effective in September, there are a number of provisions that will take effect in 2014, including a significant increase in Medicaid eligibility. All individuals will be eligible for Medicaid if their family incomes are less than 133% of the Federal Poverty Level.

In 2014, there will also be subsidies available for uninsured people below certain income levels so that they can purchase insurance through state “Exchanges” (controlled market-

places). Any plan sold in an Exchange must provide a broad range of preventive benefits for children, as well as “essential benefits” that include services important to CYSHCN (e.g., rehabilitation/ habilitation services and mental health services).

Health Reform Hits Main Street is an animated short video, featuring the You-Toons, that examines health reform law. The movie’s three sections explain the problems with the current system, and then describe the short term changes that will take place between now and 2014, and the major provisions that take effect in 2014. The video is available on the Kaiser Family Foundation website at: <http://healthreform.kff.org/The-Animation.aspx>

More information about the ACA, and information about public and private health insurance options in every state, can be found at www.healthcare.gov.

Tara Robinson is the Manager of Family Voices of California (www.familyvoicesofca.org). For more information on the ACA or health insurance options, please contact her at trobenson@familyvoicesofca.org.

Meet SFCD Board Member Kelly McRory

I was introduced to Support for Families last year through the Junior League of San Francisco. The Junior League provides a group of women to help the Support for Families staff plan many of their special events.

I was on the planning committee for the annual Holiday Ice Skating party. That event was my favorite night of the holiday season. I loved watching the excitement on the kids’ faces when they were out on the ice in their wheelchairs, walkers and folding chairs. The visit from Santa (on ice skates!) made it a truly magical night. When I talked with the families and learned how they have been helped by SFCD, I was hooked!

When I joined the board this past summer, I was nervous that I may not be accepted as I had not personally used any of Support for Families services. I joined because I think SFCD’s work is important.

My best friend’s son has autism. Seven years ago in the rural area she lived in, there were not any services available to guide her in helping her son. Even getting a diagnosis took years. She had to find all of her own resources. It was very time consuming and financially taxing in an already stressful time. An organization like Support for Families would have been able to provide her with the

education and support system that she did not have.

If anyone is interested in volunteering their time in a meaningful way or learning about the inner workings of a non-profit organization, I would strongly suggest that you apply for the SFCD board. It has been a fun and rewarding endeavor. I have found the board members to be warm and accepting. The SFCD staff is fantastic and I look forward to supporting this organization for many years to come.

Kelly McRory lives in San Francisco with her husband Scott and two sons, Will and Matthew. She is a Key Account Manager for Tulsa Dental Specialities.

Top 10 Reasons Why Age-Appropriate, Meaningful Sexuality Education is Important for Youth and Adults with Intellectual Disabilities

10. People with an intellectual disability need to have the same information that everyone else has.
9. People with an intellectual disability, but without sexuality education, are at a disadvantage in the work-place, in school and in their community.
8. People with an intellectual disability are safer from sexual abuse if they have training in recognizing and reporting sexual encroachment.
7. Even if a person is delayed intellectually, the person's body, emotions and spirit are probably NOT delayed.
6. Sexuality education overcomes fears by replacing frightening urban legends with accurate factual information.
5. Sexuality education adds to the quality of a person's life. It is the cornerstone for successful community employment, mutual relationships and independent community living.
4. EVERYONE grows older, but it is more important to GROW UP!! And isn't that what we really want young people to do?
3. Sexuality education should not only come from Ms. Lola on the XXX site on the Internet or from Hustler magazine.
2. We live in a sexualized world, whether it is TV, movies, advertisements, the mall, the supermarket... and even Disney!!! Yet parents are the first and most important influence upon their child's social and sexual development.
1. And the #1 most important reason why people with an intellectual disability need sexuality education is because: **SEXUALITY IS A NORMAL, EXPECTED AND JOYFUL PART OF OUR CULTURE AND OUR HUMANITY AND OUR LIVES.**

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<http://lesliewalker-hirsch.com/>

Sexuality Education Resources*

Sexuality Education for Children and Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities: An Instructional Manual for Parents or Caregivers of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities By D. Baxley and A. Zendell. This manual, available online for free, is designed to help parents and caregivers assist young people with intellectual or developmental disabilities in their exploration of self and sexuality. (www.albany.edu/aging/IDD/docs.htm).

Sexuality: Your Sons and Daughters with Intellectual Disabilities. By K. Melberg Schwier & D. Hingsburger. This book for parents talks about how to interact with children – no matter their age or ability – in a way that increases self-esteem, encourages appropriate behavior, empowers them to recognize and respond to abuse, and enables them to develop lifelong relationships. (www.brookespublishing.com, (800) 638-3775).

The Facts of Life...and More : Sexuality and Intimacy for People with Intellectual Disabilities. Edited by L. Walker-Hirsch. This book gives social workers, teachers, and direct support professionals comprehensive information to use as they educate people with intellectual disabilities about sexuality and help them make the best possible choices across the lifespan (www.brookespublishing.com, (800) 638-3775).

An Easy Guide to Loving Carefully For Men and Women (Fourth Edition) by L. McKee, W. Kempton and L. Stiggall-Muccigross. This book for men and women with limited reading cognitive skills presents information about sexuality in simple language. Published by Winifred Kempton Associates and available through various retail booksellers.

Circles® Curriculum. Co-created by L. Walker-Hirsch. The Circles® Curriculum is designed for use with students who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. It teaches relationship boundaries and relationship-specific behaviors using a simple multi-layer circle diagram to demonstrate the different relationship levels students will encounter in daily life. (see www.stanfield.com/circles-main.html or call (800) 421-6534).

Sexuality Training for Individuals and Agencies. Agencies looking for workshops on sexuality for the adults with disabilities they serve, and for their staff, may find that the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in their area have this resource available. To locate nearby CILs contact the National Council on Independent Living at www.ncil.org/ or call (877) 525-3400.

"You've Got a Friend: Supporting Family Connections, Friends, Love, and the Pursuit of Happiness." The College of Direct Support, an online, competency-based training program for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) nationwide, includes among its courses "You've Got a Friend...", which explores the importance and meaning of relationships in the lives of people of all ages with disabilities.. To learn more visit www.collegeofdirectsupport.com, and under "Curriculum" select "CDS Courses."

* Edited and reprinted with permission from *Impact: Feature Issue on Sexuality and People with Intellectual, Developmental and Other Disabilities 23(2)*. Minneapolis: Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. The entire issue is available online at <http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/232/default.html>

Talking with Children about Disabilities

When building inclusive classrooms and communities, adults have a key role in helping children understand and value diversity. One way to do this is by talking with children about their questions. Senta Greene, who has been providing training on inclusion to San Francisco's Preschool for All programs through the High Risk Infant Interagency Council, offers suggestions in "Let's Talk": "Children are naturally curious about things that are different or new. When dialoguing with children about disabilities or special needs, answer in simple yet direct terms. The following is a sample of common questions from children and responses that teachers can use to address their questions."

Child's Question and Curiosity	Response
Why does her body, face look like that?	"Her body grew differently than yours."
Child staring at child with disability	"I see you keep looking at _____'s legs, ears, etc. Is there a question you want to ask?"
"How come _____ doesn't talk?"	"_____ talks with his hands. He uses sign language. Would you like to learn?"
"Why do you talk to her? She can't talk."	"__ can talk. She tells us things by the way she moves her hands." or "_____ is learning how to talk. She uses different sounds to help us understand what she wants or needs."
"Why does _____ talk like a baby?"	"_ does not talk like a baby. She is learning to use her words. How can you help her?" or "She is not a baby. She is four years old just like you."
"Why does he drool like a baby?"	"His mouth has a hard time doing its job . . . so we can help him by..."
"Teacher, he's yelling too loud! Why does he always do that?"	"Yes, his voice is loud. _____ is trying to find different ways to tell us how he feels. Maybe we can help him by..."
"Why does she walk funny?"	"She is learning how to walk and to use her legs. You can help her by..."
"I don't like to play with her because she's different."	"Tell me more, what do you mean by different?" or "Sometimes it's hard to understand things that are different. But we are all different in some way."

*Excerpted from "Dialogue: A Framework for Building Communities of Compassion through Child-Child Interactions" and "The Role of Adults in Facilitating Child-Child Interactions." Thank you to Senta Greene, Full Circle: A Professional Consulting Agency, for permission to use this material. For more information on this topic, please contact Ms. Greene through the High Risk Infant Interagency Council (info@hriic.org).

Ann Carr and Judy Higuchi of HRIIC can be reached (415) 206-7743 or visit the HRIIC website at www.hriic.org.

Parent Mentor Training Special Education Series

The Parent Mentor Program (PMP) is in its fourth year of providing this training series to current and upcoming Parent Mentors in the PMP. The current series started on September 21st for English-speaking families and on September 22nd for the Spanish-speaking families.

The Special Education Series covers various areas including evaluations and assessments, the IEP process, and related services.

The Special Education Series takes a break in December. At that time we have our Parent to Parent (P2P)

portion of our training. The P2P will be held on December 4th for English speaking mentors and December 1st and 8th for Spanish speaking mentors. During this training we will talk about communication skills, active listening and what it means to be a Support for Families Parent Mentor.

Our volunteer mentors are an integral part of our organization and participate in various activities that include parent panels at universities and colleges, community outreach at city and organization events, and sharing their stories

with college interns or the media. New parent mentors, as well as the current group of recently trained mentors, are invited to participate.

If you are interested, please contact us for more information, by telephone at (415) 920-5040 or by email at:

Joan E. Selby, Parent Mentor Program Coordinator (English)
jselby@supportforfamilies.org

Sonia Valenzuela, Parent Mentor Program Coordinator (Spanish)
sspiz@supportforfamilies.org or
soniav@supportforfamilies.org



SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

A support and resource organization providing services for families of children with disabilities

Our Services

HOW YOU CAN USE US

CALL US AT:

(415) 920-5040

EMAIL US AT:

info@supportforfamilies.org

VISIT US AT:

1663 Mission Street
7th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103

GO TO OUR WEB SITE AT:

www.supportforfamilies.org
to get the latest information
on workshops, events and
new resources.

Phone Line/Drop-in Center

Get individualized information, referrals, and answers to all your questions from Support for Families staff, who are parents themselves. Staff will follow up to make sure you get the answers you need. Staff speak Cantonese, English, Spanish. Care giving for children available 4:30 to 8:30 pm Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Resource Library

Access more than 3,500 books, videotapes, DVDs and a toy lending collection for families and professionals. Visit the library catalog online at: supportforfamilies.org/library.html. On-site computer access and hands-on assistance is also available.

Support Groups

Come to a support group to find solutions to challenges, learn advocacy skills, and explore resources. Support groups provide a network for families to gain strength by sharing experiences with peers.

Volunteer Parent Mentors

Find a match with a trained volunteer Parent Mentor based on a shared culture, language, or disability issue.

Educational Workshops and Clinics

Learn about resources, rights and responsibilities in monthly parent/professional

workshops and weekly small-group clinics. Care giving for children and interpretation services are available with advance reservation for clinics and workshops.

Family Links to Mental Health

Get peer support from parents or a professional consultation from mental health clinicians who can help families and professionals access mental health and other services for children.

Family Gatherings:

Socialize and network in a fun relaxed atmosphere at quarterly events, such as our annual ice-skating party and Halloween party.

Newsletter

Read the quarterly newsletter in English, Spanish, or Chinese to find articles of interest to families and professionals.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of Support for Families is to ensure that families of children with any kind of disability or special health care need have the knowledge and support to make informed choices that enhance their children's development and well being. Through fostering partnership among families, professionals and the community, our children can flourish.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sally Spencer, *President*
Antje Shadoan, *Vice President*
Christian Dauer, *Secretary*
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Kelly McRory
James Riley
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Nancy Statler
Laurie Strawn

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Juno Duenas

How You Can Help

All services and events, even childcare, are always free of charge to encourage participation by all families. With the demand for services greater than ever, your donations help make this possible.

A gift to Support for Families means that families of children with special needs will be better prepared to help their children—and that more children with disabilities will live their lives with dignity and opportunity.

Send a check to the address below or give online at supportforfamilies.org/help.html. Every gift can help make a difference in the life of a child with special needs.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Ongoing Clinics	6
Support Groups	6
Parent Professional Workshops	7
Calendar of Events	8
Upcoming Special Events	8



Support Groups

All support groups are free of charge. Childcare is provided, unless otherwise indicated, and must be reserved in advance. If you are interested in participating in any of these groups, call (415) 920-5040 or e-mail us for more information.

Autism Group: Monthly support group for families of children with Autism. *Meets: 1st Wednesday of the month. Facilitated by Jackie Fox. NO CHILD CARE PROVIDED.*

Evening Autism Group: Meets 1st Tuesday evening of the month, 6:30-8:30pm. *Facilitated by Priya Mathur.*

Asperger's Group: For families who have children with Asperger's Syndrome. *Meets: 3rd Thursday of the month. Facilitated by Karen Haney-Owens*

Chinese-Speaking Groups

Chinatown Child Development Center: For Chinese-speaking families of children with special needs. *Meets: Every 3rd Monday of the month. Facilitated by Lisa Yee.*

SFCD Group: For Chinese-speaking families of children with special needs. *Meets: every 1st Saturday of the month. Facilitated by Mee Kit Yip-Li.*

Down Syndrome Support Group: For parents and caregivers of children with Down Syndrome. *Meets the 2nd Tuesday evening of the month. Facilitated by Judy Silva and Wes Horner.*

Living with Loss: Loss, Hope and Healing: A group for parents and caretakers of medically fragile children and children facing life threatening illness. *Facilitated by Nancy Iverson, MD.*

Parents of Transition Age Youth with Special Health Care Needs and Disabilities

Join us for information, resources and support for the issues we and our youth face as they reach adulthood. *Meets: 1st Tuesday of the month from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Facilitated by Linda Tung.*

Prader-Willi Group: For families of children with Prader-Willi Syndrome. Sibling group also provided. *Facilitated by Sue Kuyper .*

Mission Head Start Group: For Spanish-speaking families of children birth to five with special needs. *Facilitated by Christine Reina.*

Tuesday Night Group: A group for parents who have children aged 3 and above with a disability or special health care needs. *Meets one Tuesday per month. Facilitated by Nina Boyle.*

Please contact (415) 920-5040 for information about other support groups being offered or if you are interested in a group on a specific issue.

Ongoing Clinics

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) CLINICS

4:00-6:00 PM

Presented by Support for Families

Learn about Special Education law, the IEP process, what to do when things aren't working, and how to become a more active & effective team member

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI) CLINICS

4:00-6:00 PM

Presented by Katy Lusson, Ph.D., J.D., Disability Rights California

An overview of Social Security with a focus on SSI disability benefits. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet one-on-one with the presenter to ask their individual questions.

TRANSITION TO ADULT SERVICES CLINIC

4:00-6:00 PM

Presented by Support for Families

Learn about special education transition services for children age 16 and over, and how to effectively participate in the development of your child's transition plan.

All our clinics are free of charge and, unless otherwise indicated, provide childcare with advance notice. For dates and times of clinics, see Calendar of Events. Call (415) 920-5040 for more information.



Saturday Parent-Professional Workshops

Workshops are held at Support for Families of Children with Disabilities' new home at **1663 Mission Street, 7th Floor (between Duboce Street and South Van Ness Avenue)**

Registration: 8:30 am * Program: 9:00 am-12:30 pm * *Please note that Workshop presentations begin promptly at 9:00 am.* * **Reservations are required.** * Sign up early—space fills up fast! To attend a workshop, reserve child care, and/or interpretation services, you must call at least two weeks in advance: **(415) 920-5040.**

December 11, 2010 from 8:30 am-12:30 pm

Taking Advantage of Daily Routines to Teach Speech and Language

Shannon Kong, MS, CCC, Speech Language Pathologist

This lecture is designed for parents with **children ages 1-5** who have **speech or language delays/disorders**. This workshop will teach you how to take advantage of your **everyday routines** to help your child speak more clearly, learn more vocabulary, put more words together, and understand directions and questions better. You are your child's life teacher and every moment is a learning opportunity whether it is during meal time, bath time, or dressing. You will leave with a better understanding of how to teach your child better speech and language skills all day every day.

January 8, 2011 from 8:30 am-12:30 pm

"On the Road to Positive Outcomes: Leave Early, Stay on Course & Use a Great Map"

Led by FirstSteps Executive Director, Dr. Jennifer Harris, BCBA-D, and Clinical Director, Lisa Stoddard, M.A., BC

This workshop will include a discussion of the research pertaining to early intervention and the importance of early intensive treatment.

FirstSteps specializes in improving the lives of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders via empirically validated, state-of-the-art ABA treatment provided by competent and caring individuals. Established in 2004 in Hermosa Beach, California, FirstSteps has thus far improved the lives of over 150 children and families in the greater Los Angeles area. As an agency, FirstSteps has quickly established itself as a reliable and "user-friendly" source for quality behavior intervention services, now serving families and schools in the San Francisco Bay Area.

February 12, 2011 from 8:30 am-12:30 pm

Removing the Mystery: Developing a Better Understanding of the Student with Language Processing Difficulties/Dyslexia

Tuck Geerds, M.A., Educational Consultant Specializing in Specific Learning Disabilities/Dyslexia

The workshop provides insights and information on:

- * The profile of the student with Language Processing Difficulties
- * A better understanding of his/her struggles and challenges
- * Ways to help the child develop learning strategies
- * How to help these unique learners improve their self-esteem

March 19, 2011

SFCD 2011 Information and Resource Conference

A free conference for families of children with disabilities, the professionals who work with them, and the community at large. The conference will be held at John O'Connell High School, 2355 Folsom Street, San Francisco. More information to follow. Check the Support for Families website at www.supportforfamilies.org or call Support for Families at (415) 920-5040.

Improving Transitions Project Council (ITOP) continues to meet on the 2nd Wednesday of every month. If you are interested in information regarding ITOP, please e-mail info@supportforfamilies.org - Improving Transition Outcomes Project



Calendar of Events

December 2010

December 1	9:00a-1:00pm	Parent to Parent 1 (Spanish)
December 2	4:00-6:00 pm	IEP Clinic (Cantonese)
December 4	8:30a-4:30pm	Parent to Parent (English)
December 8	9:00a-1:00pm	Parent to Parent 2 (Spanish)
December 9	4:00-6:00 pm	IEP Clinic (English)
December 11	8:30am-12:30pm	<i>Taking Advantage of Daily Routines to Teach Speech and Language</i> (PPW)
December 16	4:00-6:00 pm	IEP Clinic (Spanish)
December 16	4:00-6:00 pm	Transition to Adult Services (English)

January 2011

January 6	4:00-6:00 pm	IEP Clinic (Cantonese)
January 8	8:30am-12:30pm	<i>On the Road to Positive Outcomes: Leave Early, Stay on Course & Use a Great Map</i> (PPW)
January 13	4:00-6:00 pm	IEP Clinic (English)
January 18	5:30-8:30pm	Parent Mentor Training Series (English)
January 19	9:30a-12:30p	Parent Mentor Training Series (Spanish)
January 20	4:00-6:00 pm	IEP Clinic (Spanish)
January 27	4:00-6:00 pm	Transition to Adult Services (English)

February 2011

February 3	4:00-6:00 pm	IEP Clinic (Cantonese)
February 10	4:00-6:00 pm	IEP Clinic (English)
February 12	8:30a-12:30p	<i>Dyslexia</i> (PPW)
February 15	5:30-8:30pm	Parent Mentor Training Series (English)
February 16	9:30a-12:30p	Parent Mentor Training Series (Spanish)
February 17	4:00-6:00 pm	IEP Clinic (Spanish)
February 24	4:00-6:00 pm	Transition to Adult Services (English)
February 24	4:00-6:00 pm	SSI Clinic (English)

March 2011

March 2	9:30a-12:30pm	Parent Mentor Training Series (Spanish)
March 3	4:00-6:00 pm	IEP Clinic (Cantonese)
March 10	4:00-6:00 pm	IEP Clinic (English)
March 15	5:30-8:30pm	Parent Mentor Training Series (English)
March 19	8:30am-3:30pm	2011 Information and Resource Conference
March 31	4:00-6:00 pm	Transition to Adult Services (English)



Upcoming Special Events



★ Explore fitness and fun for kids and youth with special health care needs or disabilities ★

Presented By:



Parking: Music Concourse Garage: \$3.50/hr (Enter from MLK Drive or Fulton St. at 10th Ave.)
Limited street parking available
Public transportation: #44 O'Shaughnessy, #5 Fulton, N-Judah

SATURDAY, MAY 7, 2011
12:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Golden Gate Park Music Concourse Bandshell
(Between the deYoung Museum and Academy of Sciences)

- Organizations will be there to answer questions about how your children can access their programs and provide fun activities for the whole family.
- Entertainment: music, magicians, face painting and more!
- Opportunity to relax, have fun and network with other families.
- Food and refreshments will be served.
- \$5 suggested donation per person. All our services are free. This event is funded in part by donations from people like you. Donations are gratefully accepted.

Register by calling: 415-920-5040

Support for Families of Children with Disabilities: www.supportforfamilies.org

Community Advisory Council (CAC) News - SFUSD Special Education Department Audit

The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, a consulting firm based in Massachusetts, presented its [Audit of Programs and Services in the San Francisco Unified School District](#) to the San Francisco Board of Education on September 21st, 2010. The audit, in its entirety, may be found at <http://tinyurl.com/2b8apbm>.

The audit's focus on inclusion and inclusive practices is refreshing and promising. SFUSD has a long way to go to fully include students receiving special education services and that change will not happen without strong leadership from central office administration and from principals at school sites. All stakeholders need to come to an agreement about what inclusion is, and form a clear and concise definition of what inclusive practices are, so everyone in the school community has no disagreements about it.

The Collaborative's recommendation that SFUSD switch to a service delivery model instead of the program model it currently uses will greatly assist the push toward a more fully inclusive district. Years of trying to fit students into pre-existing programs has never worked well, and has often lead to increased segregation, inappropriate placements, and costly disputes. The new system would instead focus on what services students need to receive to be successful in school, and those services would be given to students at the schools they would attend if not disabled.

Other recommendations in the audit that parents have long hoped to see SFUSD implement include:

- Articulating a unified vision for students receiving special education services that is consistent with SFUSD's strategic plan.
- Giving families of students receiving special education services the same school attendance choices as all other students.
- Having the same high expectations for all students, including those receiving special education services.
- Helping principals and site administrators understand that they are responsible and accountable for all students in their schools, including those receiving special education services.

Many of the Collaborative's recommendations are similar to recommendations made by The [SFUSD Community Advisory Committee for Special Education](#) (CAC SPED) over the last several years.

Demographic Context

The Collaborative reported that although only 12.3% of the School District Population is African American, African

Americans represent 23.6% of students receiving special education services and 49.3% of students categorized with Emotional Disturbance (ED). As the audit chillingly states: *"African American students are seven times more likely to be identified with emotional disturbance than all other groups."*

Have all students been assessed in all areas of suspected disability?

The Collaborative recommendation:

"The school district must conduct an in-depth analysis of its disproportionality percentages, and, in particular, why students of color are at significantly greater risk than other student to be identified as having selected disabilities."

Sadly, not much about the audit was surprising to parents of children receiving special education services. What was surprising was the complete omission from the report of any data about the cost of special education legal disputes, and a discussion of the main causes of those disputes.

Also missing from the report was an analysis of SFUSD's secondary transition services. Students from age 14 to 22 are supposed to be getting age-appropriate transition assessments and services related to education, employment, and independent living skills, to assist them with their transition to life after they get out of school. This area of service to students is often overlooked.

The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative's audit will be useful as a blueprint for addressing the existing inequities, lack of access, and poor educational outcomes students receiving special education services in SFUSD currently face. The audit is a positive step forward.

For more information visit these websites:

The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, <http://www.urbancollaborative.org>

Audit of Programs and Services in the San Francisco Unified School District
(English only: http://portal.sfusd.edu/data/special_ed/Audit_Programs_Services_Students_Disabilities.pdf or <http://tinyurl.com/2b8apbm>)

SFUSD Community Advisory Committee for Special Education: <http://www.sfcacsped.org>

Katy Franklin

The CAC for Special Education is an advisory committee to the Board of Education made up of parents and professionals whose purpose is to advocate for quality special education. The CAC welcome all to its meetings the 4th Thursday of each month, at 7pm at SFCD. For more information contact CAC at cac_specialed@hotmail.com

Challenger Little League Baseball for Kids with Disabilities

Bring out the ballplayer in your child through Little League's Challenger Division. Spring programs in San Francisco and from Mill Valley in the North Bay to Sunnyvale in the South Bay give boys and girls over six with physical or cognitive disabilities a chance to get out and "Play Ball!"

Kids playing Challenger baseball get fresh air and exercise and learn the basics of baseball in a supportive and non-competitive environment where no one gets outs and no one keeps score. Players bat each inning, always get on base and always round the bases. Teams play about ten one to two hour games on Sunday afternoons from March to June. Kids receive as much (or as little) assistance and support as they want or need from you or our coaches to enjoy the experience and participate fully.

I first became involved with the Challenger program as the father of a girl with Down Syndrome. We encouraged Olivia to pursue various physical activities to supplement some of the therapy programs she was engaged in when she was younger. This eventually led to a lifetime interest (she's 18 now) in dance and performance—and baseball. We were seeking a child-oriented program, so that Olivia would be relaxed and comfortable with her peer team members, and found that within the structure of San Francisco Little League. Olivia played with the team for eight seasons. It was a kick watching her develop her baseball skills while expanding her knowledge of the game. She also became, and remains, an avid Giants fan, but before last year's season she decided—on her own—that she now wanted to take on a new role and become a volunteer to help coach the team. So if you decide to sign your child up, that will be Olivia managing the line-up and sometimes helping catch.

San Francisco's Challenger team is, naturally, called the Giants, with orange and black uniforms provided by SF Little League. Home games are played either on Treasure Island or at the small field at China Basin Park, just across "McCovey Cove" from AT&T Park. Away games are at the home fields of the Mill Valley and Peninsula teams we play.

The San Francisco season begins with a motorcade through the Marina District along with all 100 or so SF Little League teams, and ends with a Jamboree get-together with all the teams we play. A special end-of-season treat is a baseball clinic sponsored by the San Francisco Giants Community Fund and hosted by Giants players and coaches.

Little League is an all-volunteer non-profit organization supporting over 25,000 Challenger players coast to coast. While a registration fee is requested, fee waivers are available so that no one is turned away.

Registration for Spring 2011 is currently underway through the San Francisco Little League website, www.sfl.org. For additional information, to volunteer, or for contacts for other Bay Area Challenger teams, please contact Peter Straus at (415) 864-2939, or pstraussf@prodigy.net.



Marcella Villafuerte on first base!

Peter Straus is the father of a great (retired) ballplayer and the coordinator of San Francisco Little League's Challenger Program.

SFCD 2010 Halloween Party

Thank you to all who helped and contributed to our 2010 Halloween Party!



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Thank You!

Donations received July 16, 2010 through October 18, 2010.

Support for Families gratefully acknowledges gifts from the following individuals, groups, and businesses. We apologize for any omissions or misspellings. Please contact us so we can correct our records.

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- Web site:
www.supportforfamilies.org

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