

Annual Report 2000



Support for Families of Children with Disabilities

Like all children, children who have disabilities need opportunities to grow and develop to their maximum ability. To help their children, parents and caretakers need both knowledge and support.

Support for Families of Children with Disabilities (SFCD) is a parent-run, San Francisco-based non-profit organization founded in 1982. We support families of children with any kind of disability or special health care need as they face challenges. We believe that, with the right combination of information, education, and support, families can make informed choices to meet their children's needs. We also believe that families who have "been there" can be the best resources for each other. Most of our staff members, 120 volunteers, and board members are, themselves, parents of children with disabilities.

Support for Families offers a wide range of information, education, and parent-to-parent support services free of charge to more than 2,400 San Francisco families every year. SFCD also provides information and educational services to professionals who work with families, and actively collaborates with other organizations to work towards a more coordinated, family-friendly network of services.

Support for Families of Children with Disabilities

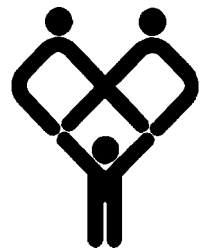
2601 Mission Street, Suite 206

San Francisco, CA 94110

Phone: (415) 282-7494

FAX: (415) 282-1226

E-mail: sfcdmiss@aol.com



At Open Gate Family Resource Center:

300 Seneca Avenue

San Francisco, CA 94112

Phone: (415) 469-4518

Fax: (415) 469-4786

E-mail: SFCDCenter@aol.com

Programs and Services 2000

All SFCD services are offered free of charge to families and professionals

Phone Line and Drop-In

Services: At the Open Gate Family Resource Center (formerly "The Center") staff (primarily parents) offer families and professionals information, resources, and referrals. SFCD Community Resource Parents who have expertise in a particular issue or parent need, such as child care or resources for Spanish speakers provide additional support in accessing services for individual families.

- ◆ Staff responded to 5,226 phone requests from families and 5,179 requests from professionals in 2000.
- ◆ 200 people visited Open Gate during drop-in hours.
- ◆ 549 new families used SFCD services during the year.

A Resource Library lends books, catalogs, audio- and video-tapes, and toys.

- ◆ The Support for Families Resource Coordinator and Librarian helped 273 families and professionals find materials.

Volunteer Parent Mentors are parents of children with disabilities who complete training and are matched with other parents to offer support and resources on an individualized basis.

- ◆ 10 parents completed Parent Mentor training in 2000.
- ◆ 60 families were matched with a volunteer Mentor in 2000.

Workshops, Trainings, and Clinics offer information to families and professionals on topics relating to disabilities and health care needs.

- ◆ Offerings in English, Spanish, and Cantonese included evening

trainings, and afternoon small group clinics. In all, 1,287 families and professionals attended.

- ◆ Topics during 2000 included Individual Education Plans, Inclusion of Students with Special Needs, Transition Planning, Supplemental Security Income, Self-Advocacy, and a Town Hall Meeting with the School District Superintendent and other administrators.

Community Education and Outreach

includes teams of parents and staff who make presentations to classes, community organizations, and professional groups about disability issues and the experiences of families. Medical and Nursing students are also matched with families to help them develop a better understanding of family needs and concerns.

- ◆ Staff and volunteers made 24 presentations this past year, reaching 519 families and professionals.
- ◆ 20 families opened their homes to medical and nursing students to help them gain insight into family concerns.

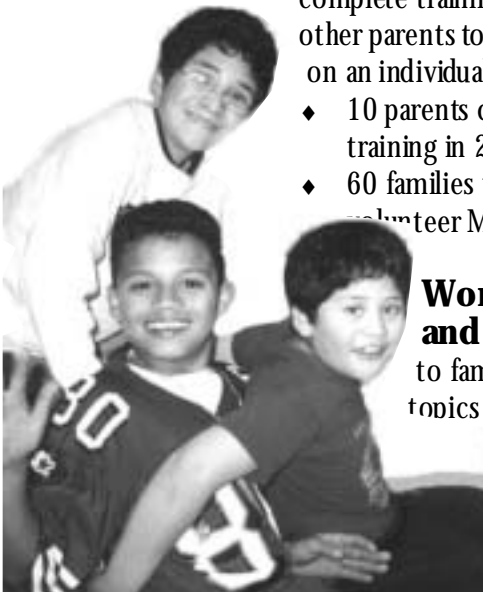
Newsletter: Our quarterly newsletter keeps parents and professionals updated on resources, legislation, and services.

- ◆ More than 4,000 individuals received the Newsletter in 2000.
- ◆ For the first time, our Newsletter was also available in Spanish and Chinese.

Family Special Events provide relaxing, fun opportunities for families to get together and enjoy themselves.

- ◆ More than 884 parents, children and enthusiastic volunteers attended free family events during 2000, including a Spring Party, Games Day, Halloween Carnival, and a Holiday Ice Skating Party.

*"The workshop was really informative. What's most reassuring is that I can come back to Support for Families for help when I need it."
-parent*



Programs and Services 2000

Support Groups offer peer support, information, and resources to parents, caretakers, and siblings of children with disabilities. A variety of groups meet individual needs.

- ◆ In 2000, 132 families participated in SFCDC Support Groups.

Siblings Group

A safe place for kids to explore and verbalize feelings about being a sibling of a child with a disability. Meets once a month.

Tuesday Evening Group

A weekly support group for parents of infants and young children with disabilities. Meets at the Child Development Center, 3700 California Street.

Spanish-Speaking Support Group

A twice monthly support group for parents and caregivers who are bilingual or monolingual.

Chinese-Speaking Support Group

Co-sponsored with the Chinatown Child Development Center (CCDC) for families who speak Cantonese.



Down Syndrome Support Group

A monthly support group for parents and caregivers who have children with Down Syndrome.

Single Parent Support Group

Bi-weekly group that focuses on the specific issues of single parenting a child with disabilities.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Support Group

Meets once a month at Cesar Chavez Elementary School. Open to families who have children who are deaf or hard of hearing — any communication method (oral, ASL, SEE Sign).

Parent Mentor Support Group

A monthly support group for parents who are participating as volunteers in the Parent Mentor Program.

Prader Willi Support Group

This group meets four times a year and is open to families throughout the Bay Area whose children have been diagnosed with Prader Willi Syndrome.

Living with Loss

A monthly support group for families who are facing issues of loss in their lives or of life threatening illness and death.



"Support for Families has been a great part of my life. They are helping me with my son who is having a hard time. They talk to me when I need them. They came to a meeting at the school to help. They give a lot of support for me right now..."
-parent

Collaborating for System Improvement

Support for Families is committed to working with agencies and service providers to develop more coordinated systems of care for children and families. Towards that end, SFCD is actively involved in several collaboratives and coordinating agencies. These include:



*"Open Gate is a great collaboration of professionals, services, education, and families. My family and I really benefited from all the services in one location — and our son has reaped the rewards of informed, concerned professionals."
-parent*

The Open Gate Family Resource Center Collaboration offers a one-stop resource for families of children with disabilities. SFCD staffs our drop-in, phone line, and library services there. Collaborative partners, including the San Francisco Unified School District, Community Alliance for Special Education, United Cerebral Palsy, Community Mental Health, and the KIDS Project, insure family access to a wide range of services and supports.

Child Care Inclusion Challenge: SFCD collaborates with the Children's Council, Child Care Law Center and Wu Yee Resources to help insure that families have access to inclusive child care.

Family Voices of California: SFCD coordinates Family Voices activities state-wide. These include the Family Voices survey of family needs and the Family-to-Family Health Information Model Project, which

links parent-run resource centers to increase family access to health care for children with special health care needs.

High Risk Infant Interagency Council: SFCD is part of this effort to facilitate coordination of services for children birth to three at-risk for developmental delays or other disabilities. Council members include Golden Gate Regional Center, the San Francisco School District, California Children's Services, Department of Human Services, and others.

Healthcare Access Project: SFCD is collaborating with the Volunteer Legal Services Program Homeless Advocacy Project and the Haight Ashbury Free Clinics, Inc. to help homeless or low-income children and adults with disabilities access social services and state disability benefits.

Responding to Family Needs: New "Family Links to Mental Health" Project

The U.S. Surgeon General has estimated that one in five children has a diagnosable mental health disorder, but that many do not receive treatment.

In a new project, SFCD and San Francisco Community Mental Health have joined forces to design a more "family friendly" approach to help families access mental health services. At the Open Gate Family Resource Center, peer parents and professionals answer families' questions and help them con-

nect with the appropriate services that can provide the ongoing support their child may need. Services include:

- ◆ Providing phone or face-to-face consultation for families or professionals who have concerns regarding a child's/client's emotional and behavioral needs.
- ◆ Providing short-term intervention to help decrease family stress.
- ◆ Helping families gain a clearer picture of what their child's specific need may be.
- ◆ Assisting families in seeking out appropriate resources.

Rosie's Story

Six years ago last August, my daughter Rosie was diagnosed with Severe Autism. She was completely nonverbal and non-reactive to anyone. She was only two at the time and it was, quite frankly, devastating. The information about Autism was scarce, the myths about Autism even scarier. People told me she would have to be institutionalized, that she would never have a "real" family life, that she would never fall in love, or have much of a future. People told me there were services out there, but that I'd just have to find them on my own. I felt I was going down a road blindfolded.

Luckily, I hooked up with Support for Families. I can't tell you how much they helped me. The Support Group was our lifeline into a world that was new to us. We were able to bounce ideas off the other parents in the

group. They had all been down the same road and kept us grounded.

Support for Families also connected me with a volunteer Parent Mentor who had two autistic children. She gave me one-on-one assistance and helped me find my way through the school district and Regional Center systems that can be so confusing to new parents.

Now I'm the experienced guide who can help others down the road. I've been a Parent Mentor and a member of the Board of Directors. It's a great feeling to give something back to Support for Families.

Today Rosie, now eight years old, goes to a regular school with kids her age. And the same child whom I thought would never talk sang "Happy Birthday" to me last week.

- Eileen Attridge

Special Events Bring Families Together

"Wherever you go people are staring, people are looking at you." - Parent of a child with cerebral palsy.

All children and their families need opportunities for relaxation and recreation together with other families, but this is often difficult when the child has a disability. Families must locate accessible activities and worry about whether their child with disabilities will find accepting peers.

SFCD's "Families Together" events are designed to give children with disabilities, their siblings, friends, and their parents or guardians a stress-free day out and a chance to socialize informally and network with others in a fun and accepting atmosphere.

We now organize four family events each year, with more than **800** family members participating last year alone. Events have included spring and Halloween parties, a picnic and games day, and a winter holiday ice-skating event. All these events are free of charge for families.

At our annual Ice-skating party at Yerba Buena Ice Rink, for example, hundreds of kids and their families find their own ways of enjoying the ice: many try skates for the first time, others slide in their shoes or folding chairs, and many others discover that wheelchairs on ice can really zoom! Santa (on skates, of course) delivers gifts of books and toys donated by businesses and individuals and scores of volunteers make the experience very special!

"It was amazing to see the turnout at the [ice-skating] party and to see all these kids with disabilities out on the ice... To go and just be a part of a holiday party is a wonderful experience for families... It's a place where people just get to have a normal sort of life." - parent

"Support for Families was so reassuring. I got a variety of information in one place. I don't know of anywhere else that gives the same amount of information"
-parent

Thank You...

To the many supporters of Support for Families in 2000.

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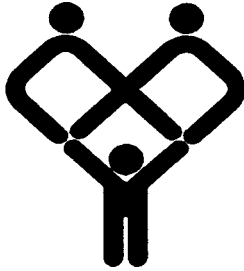
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 California Dept. of Developmental Services
 San Francisco Department of Public Health
 San Francisco Children and Families Commission
 San Francisco Dept. of Children, Youth, and Their Families
 San Francisco Dept. of Human Services

*"As a teacher, I really appreciate all the care, concern and knowledge you share with parents. You are an invaluable resource for so many families."
 -teacher*



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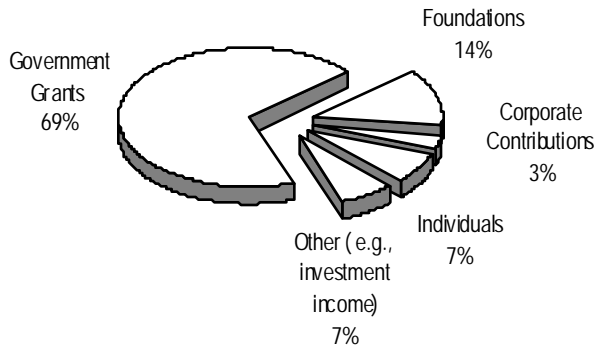
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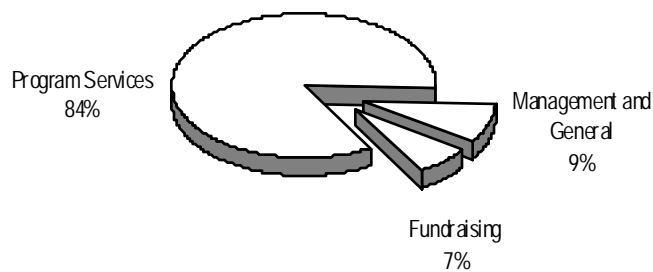
Income

January 1—December 31, 2000



Expenses

January 1—December 31, 2000



Complete audited financial statements are available at the Support for Families Office.

