



Welcome Newsletter



Parent to Parent of Colorado

Welcome Edition, 2010

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Getting
Connected!!

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and

Wisdom

... and all
you need
to know
about
Parent to Parent

Hang
on to your
Welcome
Edition
Newsletter

Why Parent to Parent? by Dianne McNamara

Do you remember when you received the news about your child's disability? It is a moment I will never forget. I remember wanting to know if there were others in the same situation. I wanted to talk to them, to find out who they were and what life was like for them. I wanted their wisdom and I wanted more than the pamphlet they handed me in the hospital that explained my daughter's diagnosis. I wanted a real, live person.

Parent to Parent of Colorado (more commonly known as P2P) is just such a resource for new (and not so new) parents of sons or daughters with disabilities and special health care needs. By matching "veteran" parents in a one-to-one relationship with a parent who is looking for information and support, P2P helps to establish that important connection that might not otherwise happen.



Parent to Parent programs are available in over 30 states. In Colorado, our Parent to Parent has a growing database of parents who are willing to reach out to each other. By connecting with another parent, we may learn that two people may have very different ways of dealing with situations, and so we stretch and grow. With Parent to Parent support, there is an opportunity to:

- seek out and accept the support of others
- learn to be an advocate for your child in a variety of arenas such as education, health-care and policy
- have a safe place to ask questions



I was referred to our local Arc after the birth of my child, and I attended a Mother's Coffee in a nearby home two short weeks later. There were about six other moms present, each of them the mother of a school-age child with a disability. They were talking a language I didn't know (IEP, resource room, inclusion, PT) and I knew they were miles ahead of me. I realized that a one-to-one discussion with another parent would have been great but a whole group of moms who seemed so at ease in a world I had just entered seemed overwhelming.

Data suggests that for parents of younger or more recently diagnosed children, one-to-one parent support significantly increases the sense of having a reliable ally and being able to cope. This support also leads to a reduction in the amount of stress parents feel. Parents of older children report that the support also helps them get their emotional and informational needs met.

The goals of Parent to Parent support are:

- to motivate families to have great expectations for their sons/daughters and to take an active role in finding and getting appropriate services
- to support families to have the resources and skills they and their children need
- to build a society that responds to the needs of the family

I have struggled through many of these issues on my own, doing my own networking and building relationships for my daughter. I do wish that it had been easier initially to connect with that one person who had walked the path before me. But now I know there is a whole community of connected and resourceful parents that I can tap into for knowledge and wisdom as my child grows. **Welcome to Parent to Parent of Colorado.**

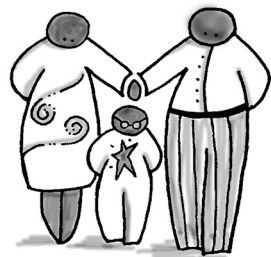
The Parent to Parent of Colorado Newsletter
is published quarterly.

Mission: We are a parent initiated, parent controlled, organized group that builds inclusive communities, takes effective and constructive group action, and supports each other on the journey of parenting our sons and daughters with special health care needs or disabilities.

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Parent to Parent Advisory Board

Parent to Parent Advisory Board members are invaluable volunteers performing as Parent Partners, gold mines of resource information and veterans with different areas of expertise. Watch for their wisdom on the listserv and in our newsletter.

Susan Blumberg	Denver
Lorene Devine	Highlands Ranch
Gerrie Frohne	Lakewood
Deon Gillespie	Denver
Heather Greene	Denver
Carol Meredith	Littleton
Lori Parker	Aurora
Yvette Plummer	Aurora
Kristina Sawyckyj	Colorado Springs
Carla Tave	Denver



The Board Corner

Red Notebooks and the Power of Parents

by Carol Meredith and Dianne McNamara

Several years ago the voters of Arapahoe and Douglas counties approved an increase of property taxes by one mill to provide supports and services for individuals with developmental disabilities. This increased resources for people with developmental disabilities by almost 10 million dollars in these two counties. Wow!

What role did parents of kids with developmental disabilities have in this victory? Plenty! Parents were out in force. They took shifts at local grocery stores handing out literature and talking with voters. They sent out literature to their friends with personal notes asking for their support. They placed campaign signs in their front yards and in their neighborhoods. They called their county commissioners. The momentum grew and grew, the community rose to support the issue and the ballot issue passed. Again, wow!

At an after election meeting of a parent support group in Parker, champagne was served with a toast for the victory. Together, parents helped to get this initiative passed and they deserved to celebrate.

Throughout this state, if parents can describe the support that will make a difference for our children, we can influence systems to provide that support. It is our responsibility to understand the needs of our families and our kids.

In recent legislative sessions, knowing that results come by working together, parents decided that they would identify each other at policy meetings by carrying a **red notebook** with a picture of their child on the front. We also used the picture of our child to put a face on the issues we wanted to talk to the legislators about.

Parent to Parent provides a forum so we can network with others interested in becoming more involved. On the listserv, we will post about policy meetings, conferences and workshops with "**Red Notebook**" in the subject line. Together, with our red notebooks, we will continue to take a stand for our children and also assist our teenagers and young adults to learn how to articulate their support needs and direct their own futures. Together we can articulate our support needs to the legislature and the community.

Otherwise – someone else will decide what is best for our children and our families.



In this technological age, where do you get most of your information? On the Web, of course!

P2P WEBPAGE - p2p-co.org

Our resource rich webpage is organized to help you find information easily. It includes parent resources (both state and national), legislative information and a listing of support groups.

WEBSITE HIGHLIGHTS

Check out the Resource Storeroom at p2p-co.org/subsite2/resource.htm.

Need information on a certain topic? The Wisdom Files might have just the answer you need.
p2p-co.org/navigation_bar_pages/wisdom.htm

P2P LISTSERVS

Parent to Parent members have access to several email groups for discussion on raising our young children and mentoring our adult children. Here we gather support and strength, share information and connect with others across the state.

The listservs also serve as a source of current information on workshops, conferences and legislation. The P2P-Policy listserv has become a powerful tool for affecting legislative changes that impact our children.

We have three listservs to meet your needs:

- groups.yahoo.com/group/P2P-CO (our general and very busy listserv)
- groups.yahoo.com/group/P2P-Policy (for those interested in policy issues)
- groups.yahoo.com/group/P2P-CO-Hispano/ (for Spanish-speaking parents)

P2P FACEBOOK FAN PAGE

Check out our Parent to Parent Fan Page. Parents and professionals can "like" the fan page and join in the discussion. [facebook.com/pages/Parent-to-Parent-of-Colorado/324801439086?ref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Parent-to-Parent-of-Colorado/324801439086?ref=ts)

And you can always email us at info@p2p-co.org.

See ya on the net!

"Where Do I Start?" Resource Guides

Parent to Parent provides several popular resource guides in English and Spanish.

'Where Do I Start?' General - A comprehensive two-page list of frequently used statewide resources for parents.

'Where Do I Start?' Disability Specific - Contact list of 45 local, state and national disability organizations.

To download these guides go to p2p-co.org or call 1-877-472-7201.

Support Groups

What is a Support Group?

A support group is a grassroots meeting of families who have a son/daughter with a disability and who want to form a network of support.

What is the purpose of Support Groups?

Connecting!!!!!! You can meet with other families and make new friends. You can pool your resources, share your experiences and exchange information. You can influence decision-making in your schools, in your community and in the legislature. You can enable full participation and encourage self-determination for all of our children.

Parent to Parent maintains a list of over 100 support groups throughout Colorado on our webpage at www.p2p-co.org.



Now...What is a Support Group?

It is what each group wants it to be. Each group has its own style and chooses its own direction. Some support groups meet only socially, some meet and have speakers, some meet and give support to one another while some meet over a particular issue in their community. Some do a combination of these. Each group is independent yet can rely on P2P for support, information and sharing.

Can We Help You Form A Support Group?

We have a database of parents and in all likelihood, we can hook you up with other parents in your area.

We can mail a packet on 'How To Start A Parent Support Group'. Just ask for a support groups information packet at 877-472-7201 or info@p2p-co.org.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PARENT TO PARENT OF COLORADO

In May of 1997 a group of parents gathered in Breckenridge to discuss and initiate a new statewide network for parents of sons and daughters with disabilities. The central outcome of the Summit at the Summit was to develop, through a working meeting of parents, a mechanism to create a statewide parent to parent network and an action plan with methods and structures to coordinate the effort. During this meeting, a statewide steering committee was formed. Over the next year this committee worked diligently to produce the shell that would become Parent to Parent of Colorado. Subcommittees were developed around writing a mission statement, producing a brochure and developing public policy.

In August of 1998, Cerebral Palsy of Colorado (CPCO) received a grant from the Colorado Department of Education to fund two part-time coordinators as well as start-up costs. The coordinators were hired in January of 1999 and since then much has happened.

P2P started with 120 families on the database. There are now over 2000 members and more are added daily. The **toll-free number (877-472-7201)** is used for parents to find information, referrals or resources, and most importantly, make those one-to-one connections. P2P maintains a list of **support groups** across the state in order to refer parents to a support group in their region. The **listserv** (see information on page 3) has grown from eight families to over 1200 who “speak” daily to each other on issues of concern. In March 2001, the **P2P web site (www.p2p-co.org)** was launched to further connect families. There are also two additional listservs to meet family's needs.



Our **annual Family Picnic** is hosted in the summer/fall of each year in Denver. This family-friendly get-together offers time for us to meet face to face with others that we have “spoken” to throughout the year.

We know there is still history to be made. We're glad you'll be a part of it.

1-1 Matching and Parent Partner Connections

by Meg Day, Parent

“Getting to know you, getting to know all about you.”

These lines from the musical, *The King and I*, pretty well sum up what happens when a parent calls P2P's toll free number or sends us an email and asks for resources or a connection to another parent.



Through the information collected on the registration form, P2P can provide parent matches based on diagnosis, type of equipment used, or even a certain medical procedure or treatment.

The best way we have of doing the important work of connecting requesting parents to our Parent Partners or veteran parents is through our database. At this time we have over 2000 families in Colorado on our database and about 30 Parent Partners. Updated information is important to us, so let us know if you change your address, phone number, etc.

The matching process usually goes like this:

- A parent (you!) calls and in about 15-20 minutes, a coordinator fills out a registration form with you. You can fill out that same form on the Internet (p2p-co.org/reg.htm).
- We ask what P2P can do for you. We provide you with a list of resources for you to contact at your convenience.
- If you request, we also give you a parent to be matched with.

Sometimes we need a day or two to find the correct information you have requested. We always tell the requesting parent if they don't get the answers they need, to please contact us again and we will try other sources.

This method of turning information over to you, the parent, and letting you use that information on your own time table has worked well.

You may call 1-877-472-7201 at any time or email us at info@p2p-co.org and request a match. It doesn't matter if your son or daughter is three months or 30 years, we can always learn something new from each other.