

How do I get involved?

Families, especially parents or guardians, are vital participants in Early Intervention/Early Supports and Services. Every parent should get involved at the *individual* level where you are intimately involved in determining the services that your own child will receive. But you can also get involved at an *organizational* level determining policies and scope for EI/ESS programs in the state and at the national level.

Local community level

Become a **Volunteer Supporting Parent with Parent to Parent of New Hampshire** (www.parenttoparentnh.org) where you can provide emotional support, insight and understanding for parents when they learn their child has special needs, or when their child may be going through a transitional period. For more information about the Parent to Parent Program, please visit the website: <http://www.parenttoparentnh.org/>

Serve on a Family Support Council for your local area agency. You will make recommendations and provide feedback to your local agencies regarding the provision of services for all families in your region. You will also help to identify gaps and barriers to services and promote the FCESS program in your region. For more information about Developmental Services Family Support, please visit the website: <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbcs/bds/family.htm>

State level

Become a parent member of the **NH Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)**, which advises and assists the Bureau of Developmental Services to administer the Family-Centered Early Supports and Services Program. Members are appointed by the Governor to represent parents and their perspectives about the Family-Centered Early Supports and Services Program. Many early childhood programs are represented on the ICC as well. A list of members and meeting information can be found at: www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dcbcs.bds.icc/index.html.

Join one of the many committees of **SPARK New Hampshire** and help promote a comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable early childhood system for the State of NH. Please visit the Spark! NH website for more information: www.sparknh.com.

Get involved with some of the many trainings offered by the **Parent Information Center**. PIC provides training, information and support to parents in New Hampshire who have children birth through age 26 with special needs. Resources are provided for parents, family members, school personnel and interested others. For more information, please visit the Parent Information Center website at: www.picnh.org

Attend the **UNH Institute on Disability Leadership Series** The seven-session long series is held from September through April, and provides parents with state-of-the-art information and strategies to effectively impact local and state organizations on issues related to individuals with disabilities. Information about this great opportunity can be found at: www.nhleadership.org When you apply, you will be asked to make a personal contribution of \$250. You can raise this from personal funds, or ask you Area Agency for a scholarship or assistance from Family Support. There is a telephone number to call and ask help on the website in the application section.

NH Family Voices is a grassroots network of advocates for children with special needs that has national and state chapters. NH Family Voices aims to achieve family-centered care for all children and youth with special health care needs and/or disabilities. They provide families tools to make informed decisions, advocate for improved public and private policies, build

partnerships among professionals and families, and serve as a trusted resource on health care. Information about how to access NH Family Voices may be obtained on their website::

<http://nhfv.org/aboutus.html>

The Developmental Services Family Support Conference is offered annually in the spring and focuses on providing information for families who have family members currently receiving Area Agency Developmental Services. This conference is planned and run by families with some assistance by Developmental Services staff. Partial scholarships are available to families from their Area Agencies. Registration and other information is available from your Area Agency.

National level

Join the **Early Intervention Family Alliance (EIFA)**, a national group of family leaders dedicated to improving outcomes for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. The EIFA works to assure meaningful family involvement in the development of Part C policies and their implementation at community, state and federal levels. For more information please visit their website: www.eifamilyalliance.org

These are a few examples of areas you can become more involved, but it is not an exhaustive list. Depending on your interests, talents, time availability, there are many more opportunities available. Contact your local area agency or one of the above contacts for more info.