

# Ongoing Support for Parent Mentors

Being a Parent Mentor and providing support to parents of children with disabilities can be a rewarding experience. It can also be challenging and emotionally draining. A Parent Mentor is also the parent of a child with a disability and may need support because of their own situation. Strategies to support Parent Mentors are:

**1. Share at parent mentor meetings**

This can be done as a part of scheduled gatherings. It is important to allow time at each meeting for personal sharing and discussion between parent mentors. It need not be a long time, 20-30 minutes is usually adequate.

**2. Seek a professional partner who is committed and invested in parent to parent efforts**

A professional partner for parent mentors to connect with provides another source of support and information. There may be times when it is not appropriate or comfortable sharing certain information with or asking questions of other parent mentors. Advice or input from a professional should be available when needed.

**3. Allow parent mentors to temporarily step out of their role**

Life is full of ups and downs and surprises for ANY parent of a child with a disability. It is important that parent mentors are able to step out of their role as a parent mentor when their own life requires it. This is an option/policy that parent mentors need to be made aware of when being recruited and reminded of periodically. There should be no guilt or burden when a parent mentor needs to do this.

**4. Encourage relationships to develop between parent mentors**

One of the greatest sources of support to a parent of a child with a disability is a connection with another parent of a child with disabilities. This is also true for parent mentors. Parent mentors can be an important source of support and information to each other. The development of one to one relationships between parent mentors may be more appropriate for some than sharing in a group setting.

Supporting parent mentors is a basic concept, yet crucial to the success of a parent to parent project. It is important that supporting parent mentors not be over looked and that it becomes an ongoing part of a parent to parent project.

