

Family Support

Caring for the Caregiver



Being a caregiver is not easy. Parents of a child with special health care needs have many responsibilities and challenges. They may need to provide medical care at home for their child and also help to coordinate care with providers and specialists. Their child may need emotional or behavioral support. They manage all of this, and take care of the rest of the family, too.

As a parent of a child with special health needs, chronic illness or a disability, you may sometimes feel overwhelmed and overworked. It may seem that there is never enough time to do it all. When this happens, it is important to take care of yourself. It is hard to do, but necessary – not just for yourself, but also for your child and family.

Sometimes you may feel alone and find it hard to share your feelings with your family or friends. You may think they will not understand. However, there are many support groups for parents of children with special needs. Sharing your thoughts with other parents may help you feel better and make it a little easier to care for your child. Family TIES Regional Coordinators can help find a support group and other types of support.

Take the time to learn about other forms of self-care. Perhaps you like to paint, read or exercise. You might consider joining a book group or yoga class. Find time to do what makes you feel good and happy. There are many ways to relieve stress, refresh and build strength.

Family TIES of Massachusetts provides information, referral, and parent to parent support for families of children with special health needs or disability and their professional partners. We also provide information about Early Intervention (EI) and maintain a complete list of EI Programs in Massachusetts.

The information provided on the back page of this sheet is not a complete list of the resources that may be available. For information about community based programs, resources and local support groups, please call your Regional Coordinator or our toll-free line 800-905-TIES (8437).

We publish an annual *Directory of Resources for Families of Children and Youth with Special Needs*. The Directory is always listed as the first place to look for resources on our Topic Sheets!

Call us if you would like a copy of the directory mailed to you. A pdf version of the directory is available to download on our website www.massfamilyties.org. You can also find the phone number for the Family TIES Regional Coordinator for your area on our website.



Here are some ideas for self-care:

- Talk to your friends and maintain friendships
- Seek and accept the support of others
- Set goals for yourself, your child and your family
- Identify and accept your feelings
- Seek professional counseling when you need it
- Attend to your own healthcare needs
- Eat healthy foods, exercise, and get plenty of rest
- Take time off without feeling guilty
- Change the way you view certain situations

Information and Resources

Family TIES Resource Directory:

- Under *Respite, Family Support and Skilled Nursing Program*

Massachusetts State Agency Programs:

- MA Department of Developmental Services
<https://blog.mass.gov/blog/home/family-support-services-for-families-caring-for-individuals-with-intellectual-disabilities/>

Statewide:

- Family TIES of Massachusetts Parent-to-Parent Program
<https://www.massfamilyties.org/parent-to-parent-program/>

National:

- Caregiver Action Network
<https://caregiveraction.org/>
- Lotsa Helping Hands
<https://lotsahelpinghands.com/>
- Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving Programs
<https://www.rosalynncarter.org/programs/>