

# Research Highlights

## Topic: Parent to Parent

Santelli, B., Turnbull, A., Marquis, J., & Lerner, E. (1995). Parent to Parent programs: A unique form of mutual support. *Infants and Young Children*, 8(2), 48-57.

### BOTTOM LINE

Based on mail surveys returned from 48 states, there are 450 active Parent to Parent programs with an estimated 25,000 parents participating. Programs range in size from a few parents to several hundred families. The average program provides support to about 19 families. The programs operate often with minimal budgets and are staffed mostly by volunteer parents. Slightly less than half have a paid coordinator. The vast majority are cross-disability.

### TIPS

- Be proactive in locating a local or state Parent to Parent programs.
- Use the U.S. map on the Beach Center website to find the contact information for local and state programs.
- Collaborate to develop and expand state and local Parent to Parent programs.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Parent to Parent programs help match parents who would otherwise not have found each other.
- Such a match is often reciprocal in nature, especially in providing informational and emotional support.
- Data from the survey indicate that 78% of the directors of Parent to Parent programs are parents who have a child with a disability.

---

## KEY FINDINGS

cont.

- Of the families participating in Parent to Parent as referred parents, 85% have a child with special needs who is younger than 12.
- Referrals to Parent to Parent programs come from a variety of sources, with 85% of referrals coming from members of the medical profession.
- 76% of Parent to Parent programs provide training to veteran parents before they are matched.
- 85% of the veteran parents said that the training covers a wide range of topics including listening and communication skills, information about the adjustment process, and an orientation to Parent to Parent program goals, activities, and philosophy.
- Over 60% of referred parents mention the emotional support of having someone who shares their experiences as the most important part of their match.
- 84% of the veteran parents indicated that they were serving as a veteran parent so they could give back to the Parent to Parent program.

---

## METHOD

- The Beach Center developed a mailing list and approximately 7,000 program/agencies providing services to families who have a family member with a disability received an invitation by mail to participate in the national survey.
- In the first phase those responding programs that were implementing the Parent to Parent model by matching a veteran parent with a referred parent received the survey for program administrators.
- In the second phase 30% of veteran and referred parents from each of the programs were selected randomly to receive the survey.

---

RELATED  
PUBLICATIONS

- Ainbinder, J., Blanchard, L., Singer, G.H.S., Sullivan, M., Powers, L., Marquis, J., & Santelli, B. (1998). How parents help one another: A qualitative study of Parent to Parent self-help. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 23*, 99-109.
- Santelli, B., Poyadue, F., & Young, J. (2001). *The Parent to Parent handbook: Connecting families of children with special needs*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Santelli, B., Turnbull, A., Marquis, J., & Lerner, E. (2000). Statewide Parent to Parent programs: Partners in early intervention. *Infants and Young Children, 13*(1), 74-88.
- Singer, G.H.S., Marquis, J., Powers, L., Blanchard, L., DiVenere, N., Santelli, B., & Sharp, M. (1999). A multi-site evaluation of Parent to Parent programs for parents of children with disabilities. *Journal of Early Intervention, 22*(3), 217-229.

---

*This research was conducted in collaboration with the Beach Center on Disability. It was funded by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Families of Children with Disabilities of the National Institute on Disability Rehabilitation and Research (H133B30070) and private endowments. For more information, contact the Beach Center on Disability at 1200 Sunnyside Avenue, 3111 Haworth Hall, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-7534. Phone: 785-864-7600. Email: Beachcenter@ku.edu. Website: www.beachcenter.org.*

Permission granted to reproduce and distribute this research brief.  
Please credit the Beach Center on Disability.