

Parent Aware Tip Sheets

Community Resources

Why is it important to have information about community resources?

A wide variety of resources are available for Minnesota's children and families. Locating them can be overwhelming, especially in stressful situations. Family members often turn to caregivers they trust and respect for help identifying resources that meet their special needs.

What are community resources and how can they help the families you work with?

Resources associated with county agencies and local school districts ensure that families across the state can access the programs they need. It is important for caregivers to be aware of the local contacts for programs serving children and families. The following programs are available in most areas of Minnesota and are excellent resources for caregivers to become familiar with:

Local School District Resources

- **Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)**

ECFE is a program for all Minnesota families with children between birth and kindergarten entrance. ECFE is based on the belief that the family provides a child's first and most significant learning experiences and parents are a child's first and most important teachers. ECFE's goal is to enhance the ability of all parents to provide the best possible environment for their child's learning and growth.

- **Early Childhood Screening**

Early Childhood Screening is a quick and simple check of how children are doing at 3½ - 4 years. It identifies possible learning or health concerns so that children can get help before starting school. Early Childhood Screening is required for entrance in Minnesota's public schools. To locate the nearest Early Childhood Screening program, call 651-582-8426.

- **Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)**

School districts provide education starting at birth to a child who experiences problems or difficulties in any area of development. Parents work with a team of professionals to plan services for the child. Services are free for children who meet eligibility requirements. ECSE services may also be listed as early intervention.

- **School Readiness**

The goal of School Readiness is to help children enter school with the skills and behaviors necessary to be successful in future learning. School districts offer programs and services unique to the needs of children and the resources in their community. To locate the nearest School Readiness Program, call 651-582-8402.

Other Programs and Resources

- **Crisis Nurseries**

Most but not all counties have Crisis Nursery programs. Crisis nurseries are able to care for children on a short-term basis when parents are unable to do so and can help families in emergency situations.

- **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)**

CCR&R helps parents identify and select quality child care/early education. These agencies also provide excellent services to child care providers/early educators such as training opportunities, scholarships and quality improvement supports. Locate the CCR&R in your area using the network website www.mnchildcare.org.

- **Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program**

WIC is a supplemental food and nutrition program for low-income, pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants and young children who are at nutritional risk. The purpose of WIC is to prevent health problems and to improve the health of program participants during critical times of growth and development. WIC provides nutrition education, access to health services, referrals to health and human services and vouchers for supplemental foods.

- **Center for Inclusive Child Care (CICC)**

The mission of the Center for Inclusive Child Care is to be a centralized, comprehensive resource network supporting inclusive care for children in community settings. CICC provides leadership, technical assistance, training and consultation to early care and education providers, school-age care providers, parents and other professionals in the field. CICC resources and services are described on their website www.inclusivechildcare.org.

What are some other resources that may be helpful?

Families may need a wide range of resources. It is impossible for caregivers to have knowledge of every resource. Using resource directories can help caregivers to find resources that match the needs of families. Minnesota has two directory programs:

- **Minnesota Help**

MinnesotaHelp.info is an online directory of services designed to help people in Minnesota find human services, information and referrals, financial assistance and other forms of help. It is especially rich in resource information for parents and families, seniors and their caregivers, people with disabilities and their caregivers; and people with low incomes. The Minnesota Help Directory can be found online at <http://minnesotahelp.info>

- **Minnesota Children and Youth with Special Health Needs (MCYSHN) Directory of Resources for Children and Families in Minnesota**

This directory provides information on resources that may help children, families, providers and others working with families and children. Users are able to search for resources by specific counties or school districts or statewide. The MCYSHN Directory can be found online at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mcshn/directory.htm>