

Raising a Child with a Developmental Disability in Rural Colorado

Overview

Receiving an IDD diagnosis can be an overwhelming process, and feeling supported and understood is imperative. This tip sheet was crafted through interviews with a rural case management agency, an occupational therapist, a speech therapist, an art therapist, El Grupo Vida, a social worker/parent from the Autism Community Store, a parent coach, and an adaptive recreation staff member.

General Resources

- **Case Management Agencies**
 - These provide assistance to individuals and families by facilitating access to necessary services and supports, including assistance with funding, Medicaid Waivers, and Early Intervention.
- **Financial Supports**
 - The Medicaid Buy-In program and SSI are two programs' families might be able to qualify for, and they can provide financial assistance.

Telehealth

Telehealth provides an excellent opportunity for families to become connected with services that might not be available in their area. There are many different forms of telehealth, and they can be tailored to the unique needs of the child and the

caregiver. Below are a few reasons why providers and parents recommend utilizing telehealth.

Parents should strongly consider telehealth for its convenience, privacy, and effectiveness, particularly given its positive evolution since the pandemic. Telehealth ensures great therapy outcomes and provides frequent and personalized support without the inconvenience of travel. The ability to receive care from the comfort of home fosters quicker rapport building, significantly reduces wait times, and diminishes any stigma associated with seeking assistance.

Additionally, telehealth creates valuable opportunities to offer support and instill crucial skills directly within the familiar environment of one's home, fostering habits that seamlessly integrate into daily life. The Early Intervention Services program has significantly improved children's developmental outcomes through telehealth-based parent coaching models. Telehealth's consistent support and advanced technological features enhance the therapeutic experience, and telehealth emerges as a beneficial option for parents. Its post-pandemic advancements, including interactive backgrounds, characters, and storytelling, further enhance the overall therapeutic journey.

Caregiver Support and Education

Parent support groups and educational initiatives foster community by using evidence-based strategies and workshops encompassing health, early childhood education, bullying,

behavior management, and advocacy. These programs empower families with children of all abilities by offering comprehensive training, information, technical assistance, and parent mentorship programs.

Online Resources

Family Voices, Autism Certification Center, Understood, TACA, The Living Spectrum, Parent to Parent, Peak Parent Center, Bright By Three, El Grupo Vida, Family Voices, The ARC, and Show and Tell. All sites are linked:

<https://shorturl.at/bEM58>

Thinking Outside the Box

- Library Programs
 - Start your search at your local public library for available resources. If their programs don't cater to your children's needs, inquire about referrals or collaboration with staff to address them. Ask about partnerships with the Association for Library Services for Children for enhanced services. Some communities offer tailored programs like book talks and storytelling designed for children with learning or developmental disabilities, along with curated book lists. If specialized services aren't available locally, consider reaching out to organizations such as the ARC, group home directors, special education teachers, or your state library for further assistance.

- Online Music Lessons
 - A Child’s Song Denver has online music lessons that nurture an appreciation for music while providing programs and education to share the developmental, and social-emotional benefits of music for children and adults.

- Dance and Movement Therapy
 - Designed for elementary and middle schoolers with intellectual, developmental, or sensory differences. Beginner-level classes currently take place through Zoom, providing a fun outlet for children to let out energy and meet new people.

- Movie Theaters
 - Many theaters, such as AMC and Regal, offer sensory-friendly movie showings. Reach out to local theaters or organizations like the Autism Society to explore partnership opportunities for sensory-friendly movie programs.

Special Olympics

The mission of the Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with disabilities. Their aim is to offer ongoing opportunities for individuals to enhance their physical fitness, demonstrate courage, find joy, and engage in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendships with their families, fellow Special Olympics athletes, and the wider community. Special Olympics has a broad outreach, spanning across the Denver, Northeast, Southwest, and Western

regions. Their focus lies in the continual expansion of athletes, teams, and local programs, as well as strengthening their presence within schools.

Online, they offer a range of Inclusive Health resources, including All Abilities Yoga Cards, Healthy LEAP (Lifestyle Education and Practice), a comprehensive 9-week health and fitness curriculum, wellness challenges, and virtual training sessions for athletes. This year, Special Olympics Colorado has a diverse array of sports opportunities, including figure skating, skiing, snowshoeing, cross-country, snowboarding, track and field, gymnastics, powerlifting, soccer, swimming, tennis, softball, golf, cycling, bocce, bowling, flag football, and volleyball.

Therapeutic Recreation

Adaptive recreation programs offer a wide range of activities such as soccer, basketball, swim lessons, martial arts, and special events tailored to youth, including discussions with police officers and sensory-friendly family events. These programs create a supportive and engaging environment for participants to explore their abilities and interests. Effective initiatives for children with disabilities involve promoting program visibility, leveraging positive feedback from parents, and collaborating with community stakeholders. Therapeutic recreation contributes to children's well-being by addressing social, cognitive, physical, and emotional skills through diverse activities.

Partnerships with local communities, organizations, and schools enhance the accessibility and inclusivity of these programs. Families in rural areas can seek resources and program plans from nearby therapeutic recreation centers or

organizations like the National Inclusion Project, which provides tools and training for inclusive experiences.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is vital for caregivers, involving the acknowledgment of personal struggles without judgment and the practice of kindness towards oneself. By giving oneself grace, caregivers can replenish emotional resources and navigate resources and support according to their own priorities and timelines. In regions where access to respite care services is limited, certain communities are taking proactive steps to establish respite groups. These groups operate on a rotational basis, wherein members take turns providing childcare assistance to one another, allowing caregivers to have respite care.



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Citation: Jones, M. (2024). Raising a Child with a Developmental Disability in Rural Colorado. [tip sheet] JFK Partners: Aurora, CO.

“This project was supported, in part, by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) under the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Grant T73MC11044 and by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) under the University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCDEDD) Grant 90DDUC0106 of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.”