

Parents with Disabilities and their Children: Promoting Inclusion and Awareness in the Classroom



A guide for Classroom Teachers
Grades 1-6

*Through the Looking Glass,
The National Center for Parents with Disabilities and their Families*

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Through the Looking Glass
3075 Adeline Street, Suite 120
Berkeley, CA 94703
Toll-Free within the U.S. (800) 644-2666
Local/International (510) 848-1112
TTY: (510) 848-1005
FAX: (510) 848-4445
email: tlg@lookingglass.org
website: www.lookingglass.org

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Introduction

In the U.S., there are at least 4 million parents with significant disabilities who are raising children under age 18. This includes parents who have a physical disability, parents who are deaf, parents who are blind, parents with chronic illnesses, parents who have an intellectual disability and parents who have a psychiatric disability. Although there are millions of parents with disabilities in the U.S., these parents are often left out of the picture – invisible to the general public and even in their home communities.

Classroom teachers and school officials can make a major and lifelong impact in how parents with disabilities are included in their children's education. This guide offers suggestions to include parents with disabilities in your school as well as classroom activities.

Through the Looking Glass is a nonprofit organization serving families with disabilities. We are also The National Center for Parents with Disabilities and their Families. Over the past 30 years, we've trained and provided services to over 100,000 consumers and professionals to create more awareness about and better resources for the millions of parents with disabilities in the U.S.

One of the guiding principles at Through the Looking Glass is to provide **disability-appropriate** services and support to the very diverse population of those with disabilities. This means taking into account the specific nature of the disability that a parent may have as well as the parent's language, ethnic and cultural background, the age of their children and individual preferences. For parents with disabilities and their families, one size does not fit all. What works for one family may not work for another family – even though both parents may appear to have the exact same disability.

We welcome your feedback as well as ideas and suggestions for other teachers and school personnel. Also, as part of our National Center, we can offer trainings and consultations to parents, family members and other professionals concerning parents with disabilities and their families

If you have specific suggestions or activities for other teachers to increase awareness and participation of parents with disabilities at your school, please send them to us so we can post these ideas on our website as well as include this in future publications. Suggestions can be anonymous or can be credited to you and your school depending on your preference.

Terminology: What's the Right Word?

There are many different perspectives on what it means to have a “disability.” Some people may not use this term at all. For example, many deaf people do not say they have a disability, but rather are “deaf.” People with short stature may refer to themselves as “little people.”

People often worry about using the right word or phrase when talking about people with disabilities. In this case, “parents with disabilities.” Why not say “disabled parent” rather than “parent with a disability”? Not everyone agrees which one is the preferred term. For some people, neither term is preferable. Although some of the explanations below may be too complicated for younger children, nevertheless, as a classroom teacher you can help shape the language that they use when talking about parents with disabilities. It isn't so much about correcting children for using the wrong word, but to have them understand that each of us may have a particular label that we like or don't like.

Feeling awkward or uncomfortable because you aren't sure which is the right word isn't limited just to people with disabilities. It can happen around using the right words for a person's gender, race, ethnicity and other groups of people as well. The important part is to check with the person or people involved -- find out what they prefer. But, also continue to monitor the words we use to describe other people -- knowing that we all have different preferences and ideas about what's right. The most important part is to be open and willing to talk about it.

Below are some suggestions for how to talk about parents with disabilities:

“Parent with a disability” “Parent who has a disability”

This word order emphasizes the parent first – who also happens to have a disability. This phrase is preferred by many, but not all. Related terms that use this word order include: a parent who is blind; a parent who uses a wheelchair; parent who has a physical disability.

“Disabled parent”

This word order takes the opposite view – that is, being disabled is very much a part of who the person is. For some, being “disabled” is very much a part of their identity and is something to be proud of -- even if some people have negative ideas about what being disabled means. Others, however, feel that being labeled “disabled” first undermines the sense that the person is more than just their disability. Related terms that use this word order include: blind parent; deaf parent; physically disabled parent.

“I'm not disabled.” “I don't have a disability.”

There are other words that some people prefer instead of “disabled” or “disability” no matter what the word order is. For example, many culturally Deaf people do not consider themselves “disabled” but merely “Deaf.” Similarly, other groups prefer using specific

terms for their condition such as “blind” or “little person” or being a “diabetic” rather than being labeled as being “disabled.”

‘Handicapped’ ‘Impaired’ ‘Challenged’

Most people with disabilities find the term “handicapped” to be offensive because the word emphasizes a person’s limitation. Historically the word “handicapped” was often used to portray someone who is incapable and needs a great deal of help. Similarly the word “impaired” also has a negative connotation that emphasizes the person’s limitation (e.g., hearing-impaired, visually-impaired, person with a physical impairment”). Another term that is usually considered awkward and somewhat negative is “challenged” (e.g., physically-challenged, visually-challenged).

‘Intellectual Disability’

Among the many changes in preferred words, perhaps the most notable are terms that were used to describe someone who was previously labeled “mentally retarded.” That term is no longer used and is considered offensive, along with terms like “slow” or “retard.” Other terms that were used in the past like “developmentally delayed” or “dd” are also not used. The preferred term is someone “who has an intellectual disability.”

‘Deaf Parent’

Many parents who have a significant hearing loss identify themselves as a “Deaf parent” (note the Capital D) rather than “a parent with a disability.” These parents use American Sign Language and actively participate in the Deaf Community. They consider themselves culturally Deaf (not just having a hearing loss). Culturally Deaf parents do not typically want to be labeled as having “a disability.” Also, note that approximately 90% of the children of Deaf parents will be hearing. Many of these hearing children are bilingual (using spoken English and American Sign Language) and, like their parents, can also be considered culturally Deaf.

Other terms to use or not use

People with disabilities do not want to be called or considered “abnormal” – so avoid referring to people without disabilities as “normal.” Some people think it might be awkward or inappropriate to ask a deaf parent “did you hear about...” or ask a blind parent “did you see that story about....” or ask a parent using a wheelchair if they “walk their child to school.” Most parents with disabilities are not bothered at all by these terms and, in fact, prefer that you use words you would use in everyday conversation with anyone.

So...

As you can see, there are many different ways to talk about parents with disabilities. If you’re in doubt, ask the parent. And remember that two parents who seem to have the exact same disability may not prefer the same thing.

For simplicity’s sake, we will mostly use the term “parents with disabilities” throughout this guide except when referring to parents with a specific type of disability or medical condition.

Do Any of the Students at your School Have Parents with Disabilities?

It's very likely that some students at your school have parents with disabilities. In the U.S., there are an estimated 4.1 million disabled parents with children under age 18. Many parents have disabilities that are invisible; others have disabilities that change over time. Some disabilities are life-long, while others may be recent or temporary. For more specific estimates of parents with disabilities in your state or in your county, please see Through the Looking Glass' website www.lookingglass.org

Parents with disabilities don't necessarily identify themselves publicly; others don't even label themselves as having a disability. Children, too, may not always understand or want to reveal that their parents have disabilities. Additionally, the school's physical facilities or ways that the school communicates with parents may prevent parents with disabilities from showing up at the school or communicating with teachers or school officials. Teachers or school officials may not realize a parent with a physical disability can't get to a parent-teacher meeting due to an inaccessible building or the lack of accessible public transportation. Or, a parent may not be able to read a letter sent by the school because the parent is blind or may have difficulty with written language. Or, phone calls to a child's home may be unanswered because the parent is deaf and uses a videophone or TTY. The lack of accessible facilities or disability-appropriate accommodations may make it seem like there are no parents with disabilities of children at your school when in fact there are.

It requires creative and sensitive efforts to find out which children at your school have parents with disabilities. There isn't necessarily an easy or best way to find this out. A parent's disability may be evident or come out naturally in conversation when the parent first enrolls the child in school or stops by to drop off their children. Some parents may contact school officials and teachers to let them know the best way to accommodate them. However, many disabilities are not obvious and some parents themselves may be reluctant to reveal or openly discuss having a disability. Similarly, some children of parents with disabilities may be very open about having others know they have a parent with a disability while others may be very secretive or uncomfortable explaining that their parent has a disability.

Asking everyone in the classroom, "Whose parent is deaf or blind or has some kind of disability?" can be problematic. It may be embarrassing for some students, although there are also plenty of children who are very open and proud of their parents who have disability. Younger children may not even be aware that their parent is somehow "different" than other parents. At Through the Looking Glass, we hear from many adults who were raised by parents with disabilities that they never really viewed their mom or dad as "different" until they first started school and realized that other parents were not like their own parent. A child's home environment and possibly the parent's social network of others who also have disabilities may create a community in which having a disability is the norm. It sometimes comes as a bit of a shock for some children to start

seeing and learning that their parent behaves or functions differently than most other children's parents. Reconciling what is normal at home with what others perceive as different can be empowering or stigmatizing depending on how a parent's "difference" is understood and responded to by other children and teachers.

What Is My School's Responsibility to Accommodate Parents with Disabilities?

Promoting disability awareness can be most effective by providing real-life interaction and active participation of those with disabilities, including children with disabilities as well as adults with disabilities. Before developing specific activities for disability awareness concerning parents with disabilities, school officials and teachers should review how the school can be more accommodating and accessible to parents with disabilities. At Through the Looking Glass, our experience is that although school officials and teachers may be aware of legal and social obligations to accommodate children with disabilities in their schools, all-too-frequently school administrators and teachers are unaware that some of the children in their schools may have parents with disabilities. Keep in mind that the majority of disabled parents' children do not have disabilities, so it may not be apparent which child has a parent with a disability.

There are mandatory federal regulations regarding the obligation of schools to accommodate parents with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Justice's website provides detailed federal regulations regarding accommodating individuals with disabilities under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act).

<http://www.ada.gov/reg2.html>

The National Association of the Deaf also provides a guide for schools regarding accommodating Deaf parents, but these are also useful to consider regarding other parents with disabilities:

<http://www.nad.org/issues/education/k-12/section-504-and-ada-obligations>

Modifications and accommodations for children are not always workable or appropriate for adults with disabilities. For example, most playground equipment, drinking fountains and toilets that are accessible for small children with disabilities are usually not accessible for adults with physical disabilities. Also, if there are currently no children with a particular type of disability in the school such as a deaf child or a blind child, the school may not have experience accommodating a parent who is deaf or blind. Further, certain information and functions that any parent would be expected to receive or act on (e.g., letters sent home from a teacher, parent-teacher meetings, report cards, parents participating in field-trips) may require different solutions for a parent with a disability than would be appropriate for a child with a disability.

When meeting with any parent, it can be helpful to ask about the best way to communicate with the parent – whether by phone, by letter, email, or in-person. This can open the door to discussing the best options and accommodations.

It is important for teachers and other professionals to understand that some parents with disabilities are reluctant to reveal that they have a disability out of fear that their parenting capabilities will be questioned or worse. Too many parents with disabilities have unjustly had their children temporarily or permanently removed from them because of misperceptions and false assumptions about their capabilities.

If you have a question about your school's responsibility to accommodate a parent with a disability, contact the U.S. Department of Justice American with Disabilities Act (ADA) line. ADA specialists are available Monday through Friday from 9:30 AM until 5:30 PM (Eastern time) except on Thursday when the hours are 12:30 PM until 5:30 PM. Spanish language service is also available. **800 - 514 - 0301** (voice); **800 - 514 - 0383** (TTY)
<http://www.ada.gov/infoline.htm>

Suggestions for Accommodating Parents with Diverse Disabilities

It's difficult to list all the specific ways that you as a classroom teacher can help include and accommodate parents who have diverse disabilities and medical conditions. So much depends on the individual situation -- the exact nature of the parent's disability, the individual parent's preferences, the age of the student(s), the availability of resources, as well as what the specific issue or school activity concerns. How the student is doing? Homework? After school programs? Parent-Teacher meetings? Special school events?

The first step would be to discuss with the parent what works best for him or her. This could be done during an initial meeting with the parent, or possibly included in questions for the parent on a school intake form when the student enrolls. For example, "Do you need any special accommodations to help us better communicate with you, or to make it easier for you to participate in your child's education?" It would be best if this kind of question is asked of all parents since it's not always obvious which parent may need some accommodation. Also, asking this question of all parents avoids targeting only those who appear to have a disability. Not all parents with disabilities are comfortable being openly identified as having a disability or requesting special accommodations.

Below are a few suggestions for accommodating parents with different types of disabilities.

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PARENTS WHO ARE BLIND OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED

Parents who are blind or have a visual disability include those with no functional vision to those with limited vision in one or both eyes. A very small percentage of persons with vision loss are "totally blind"-- meaning there is no light perception of any kind and the person sees nothing at any time. The majority of people who have some form of vision loss have varying degrees of residual vision, or functional vision that they use throughout their daily experiences. Depending on the cause of their vision loss some people may see better during the day, or see more at night. Some people see only what is directly in front of them (tunnel vision), while others see what is visible on the outside edges. Some people see well enough to drive with adapted glasses; some people wear glasses with improved magnification to increase their functional vision, while others use specific technologies to either read, travel, or perform daily living tasks.

A significant visual disability usually limits the ability to read printed materials or clearly see your environment. Some parents may use a cane to get around, others may prefer a guide-dog, while others use neither or have figured out other ways that work for them.

Instead of printed materials, a parent with a visual disability may prefer information in an alternate format such as Large Print or Braille. With the increasing availability of email, many parents now prefer to have the information sent to them via email so they can use a text reader or other specialized equipment at home. A good source for information about making printed materials more accessible is the National Federation of the Blind: <http://www.nfb.org/nfb/Resources.asp?SnID=202569912>

If a parent is new to the school, you can ask the parent if they would like someone (such as another parent, a teacher or staff member) to guide them through the school facilities if they are unfamiliar with the school layout. Typically, let the blind person lightly hold on to your arm and stay ahead of the parent – don't push them ahead of you. This way the parent can feel what's coming such as a step or turn in the path.

Some blind parents as well as parents with other disabilities may use a service guide-dog when they come to the school. Service dogs are working animals and should not be treated as pets when working in public. Resist petting or talking to the dog without first asking the owner for permission to interact with the dog.

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DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING PARENTS

Deaf and hard-of-hearing parents may have very limited hearing or none at all. Although there are clinical distinctions between being “deaf” and being “hard-of-hearing,” an individual may refer to themselves as “deaf” or as “hard-of-hearing” depending on their preference rather than a clinical definition. Some deaf and hard-of-hearing people use sign language, others use lipreading and speaking, while others use some combination of both of these.

Many deaf and hard-of-hearing parents use a variety of specialized phone equipment in addition to texting or email. They may use a video-phone or a TTY/TDD. You don't need to have one of these devices to have a phone conversation with the deaf parent. From anywhere in the U.S., **dial 711** and you will reach a “Relay Operator.” Give the Relay Operator the deaf parent's phone number, and the operator will walk you through how to talk back and forth with the deaf parent.

At school meetings or events, deaf parents may prefer to have a sign language interpreter that the school arranges. But, don't rely on the children of deaf parents or a volunteer who has taken a few sign language courses to do the interpreting. Neither one is appropriate and in some cases, can increase misunderstandings. There are many qualified and certified sign language interpreters available. Interpreters should be matched to the specific sign language preference of the parent. One important tip when working with an interpreter is to always face and talk to the deaf person – not the interpreter. Although American Sign Language (ASL) is the most commonly used sign language among life-long deaf people in the U.S., there are other sign languages options. One resource is for

learning more about sign language interpreters as well as finding a qualified interpreter is the national Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf: <http://www.rid.org/>

Some deaf and hard-of-hearing parents who lipread or have some hearing may want to sit close to the speaker. Other deaf or hard-of-hearing parents may prefer to use pen-and-paper to write notes back and forth to teachers or other school officials. Even for those parents who have some hearing or use hearing-aids, it is very difficult to carry on a conversation in a large noisy room. Most hearing-aids amplify all the sounds in the room – from multiple conversations across the room to background music. If you are meeting with the parent(s), find a smaller quieter room – or at least find a corner of the room that may be a little less noisy.

Provide printed agendas of meetings or a script of a school play for those who are deaf to help them follow along. A volunteer may be able to write down summaries of what is being said and pass this along to the deaf parent sitting next to them. Other resources include real-time captioning (a trained professional types out what is being said and it is projected onto a screen) or an FM audio loop for those parents who have some hearing.

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PARENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Parents with physical disabilities includes those who have limitations walking, lifting or carrying as well as those who easily tire or are in pain from routine physical activities.

Make sure meeting and event spaces are accessible for those with mobility limitations. This includes not only ramps and wide-enough doorways, but also restrooms, cafeterias or other school facilities that any parent may expect to use.

Provide disabled/handicapped parking spaces, making sure other parents' vehicles do not block access or park in the handicapped space "just for a minute or two."

Parents with mobility limitations (as well as parents with visual or other types of disabilities) may use a local paratransit service as their primary mode of transportation. Paratransit vehicles are typically vans or small buses that transport the parent to and from their desired destination. But, the exact nature and availability of transportation services varies widely and transportation to and from their child's school may not always be an option for a parent with a disability. Even if available, paratransit services often have a wide window of time in which riders are picked up or dropped off. This may result in the parent being unavoidably late for a scheduled appointment or needing to wait to be picked up long after the appointment is concluded. If the lack of accessible transportation prevents a parent from attending a meeting, consider using telephone or email as a way of communicating directly with the parent.

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PARENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

“Parents with intellectual disabilities” refer to those parents who were previously labeled as being “developmentally disabled” or “mentally retarded.” Very few parents with intellectual disabilities will openly say that they have an intellectual disability. Instead, many of these parents may choose to describe themselves as having a learning disability or “learning problems” – although there are also other parents who have learning disabilities such as ADHD or dyslexia who do not have an intellectual disability.

“Parents with “cognitive disabilities” is a broad group of individuals that can include not only those with intellectual disabilities but also those parents who have had a stroke, traumatic brain injury or other medical condition that can affect a person’s cognition, learning and/or memory. There are many different causes and impacts for those with intellectual and cognitive disabilities, but these conditions may similarly affect a parent’s interaction with their child’s teacher, classroom and other school functions.

Parents with intellectual or cognitive disabilities may have difficulty fully understanding written materials sent to the parent or sent home with the child. These materials could include their child’s homework assignment and announcements about planned school activities and meetings. Some parents may appear lazy or disinterested in their child’s education because they don’t follow-through on requests from the school or don’t seem to be participating in their child’s schoolwork or other activities.

Their child’s homework may be problematic for some parents with intellectual or cognitive disabilities. The parent may find it difficult to help their child stay organized or complete homework assignments. If there is an after-school program or other special tutors that are available, this can be an option – keeping in mind that the parent should not feel undermined or made to feel inadequate because their child needs additional support. For teachers who have a few minutes to spare, calling the parent to explain the student’s homework assignment can be helpful.

Parents may have difficulty remembering to keep appointments, so reminders ahead of time may be useful – especially if the parent is ok with this arrangement. Another approach is to have a regularly scheduled time to meet with the parent (e.g., 5-10 minutes on a particular day of the week) to help the parent stay on track with how their child is doing and what to expect.

When meeting or talking with a parent, sometimes asking the parent a question in more than one way can help with understanding or let you know how well the parent has understood you. Follow-up phone calls may help a parent who may not have fully understood information sent to them.

Some parents may have a supportive relative, friend or advocate whom they feel comfortable including in school communications and meetings. Check with the parent to see if she or he would like to include someone else in the loop. If such a person does become involved, when you meet with them be sure to convey that the parent – not the

family member, friend or advocate – is the person in charge of their child. Addressing the parent rather than the assistant tends to convey this message.

From over 30 years of experience at Through the Looking Glass working with thousands of parents with intellectual and cognitive disabilities, it's critical to be respectful when interacting with these parents, as many have had a lifetime of people criticizing or underestimating their capability. Complementing the parent can go a long way to building trust so the parent feels comfortable discussing the best ways to work together.

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PARENTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

Many parents with mental illness have their disability well managed with medication and other treatments, and there may be no significant impact on their children. Mental illness (also referred to as a psychiatric disability) includes many different conditions including major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress and anxiety. Mental illness remains a highly stigmatized condition in our society, and families may be reluctant to reveal or discuss a parent's mental illness. Nor should you expect that a child whose parent has a mental illness will have problems. As with families of parents with other disabilities, a student's academic or behavioral problems may be wrongly attributed to the disability rather than other causes.

There are, however, some children who are affected by their parent's mental illness, particularly if the untreated illness is severe, highly unpredictable and/or results in the parent being frequently absent due to hospitalizations or other treatments. This may affect a student's attendance, performance or interaction with other students. As a teacher, you can be supportive to the parent and the child by being nonjudgmental and assuring confidentiality. If a parent discloses that he or she has a mental illness, you can ask them how they feel it affects their child(ren) and what might be helpful to support the child.

A nonprofit Australian organization (Children of Parents with Mental Illness) has a website specifically designed for teachers and school staff.

<http://www.copmi.net.au/professionals/professional-fields/schools-education.html>

PARENTS WITH OTHER DISABILITIES

We have only covered a few major categories of parents with disabilities. There are many more parents not mentioned above who have temporary or long-term medical conditions or disabilities that may affect their interaction with you and their child's school. These conditions may affect communicating, mobility, energy-level or availability. There are also many parents who have multiple disabilities – that is, a parent could be deaf and blind, or have an intellectual disability and also use a wheelchair.

Involving Parents with Disabilities in the Classroom

Depending upon their availability and interests, parents with disabilities can be involved in specific disability-oriented activities as well as activities that all parents participate in.

Disability Awareness Curriculum

Most of the disability awareness materials and curriculum available for school age children focus on children with disabilities, although occasionally some may also include famous adults with disabilities. A good resource for several websites and curricula for younger children is the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities: <http://nichcy.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/bib13.pdf> Another resource for younger and older children is The Family Village: <http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/general/disability-awareness.html> Although most of the resources and activities for children usually do not include awareness or discussion of adults with disabilities, teachers can be creative in expanding the activities and discussions to consider that there are also adults with disabilities as well.

Probably one of the best ways to promote disability awareness of parents with disabilities is to invite a parent with a disability to talk with your students. If one of the parents of children in your classroom or school has a disability, the parent may be willing to come to the classroom to talk about living with a disability as part of planned disability awareness days or curriculum. However, the teacher could also just make time for the parent with a disability to come to the classroom without needing to wait until the disability awareness curriculum is scheduled. Our experience at Through the Looking Glass is that it is usually more helpful if the parent comes fairly early in the school year in order to address questions and be more familiar to the other children in the classroom.

There are many classroom teachers who have a disability, and many are also parents. One of your colleagues may be willing to come in and talk with your students. If there isn't a parent, teacher or other adult with a disability available at your school, another option would be to invite an adult with a disability (who may or may not be a parent). Several national disability organizations have local chapters, and one of these may be able to recommend someone who would be willing to come out to your school to do a brief presentation. These include:

- National Centers for Independent Living (<http://www.ncil.org/>)
- National Association of the Deaf (www.nad.org)
- National Federation of the Blind (www.nfb.org),
- National M.S. Society (<http://www.nationalmssociety.org>)
- National Spinal Cord Injury Association (<http://www.spinalcord.org/>)
- Little People of America (<http://www.lpaonline.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=37298&orgId=lpa>)

There are many more national and local organizations focused on particular types of disabilities such as diabetes, lupus, arthritis; an Internet search may help you locate a local chapter of an organization focusing on a specific type of disability or medical condition.

Keep in mind that there are many different types of disabilities and medical conditions. Although a parent with a specific type of disability may be willing to talk with your students, it's important to remember that this parent will not represent all different types of disabilities. For example, a deaf parent would not necessarily know much about life as a blind parent, or vice-versa. This is no different than expecting one parent who is Chinese-American to be familiar with all other Asian cultures and languages.

Parent Volunteers

Rather than thinking of involving a parent with a disability only with “disability awareness” or disability topics, you can often create greater awareness by ensuring that parents with disabilities are invited and accommodated in routine school functions and classroom activities open to all parents. This can range from classroom presentations on careers to school-wide functions such as sports events, parent-teacher conferences, bake sales, afterschool activities and class field-trips. This underscores that an adult with a disability is not defined by their disability -- they are also professionals, have hobbies, interests, etc. And, of course, they are also parents.

Classroom Activities to Promote Awareness about Parents with Disabilities

Increasing awareness about parents with disabilities doesn't necessarily require new or separate activities. By simply expanding materials or activities that are already part of the classroom set-up or curriculum, you can increase the awareness and visibility of adults with disabilities – many of whom are also parents.

Visuals. Whether parents or not, adults with disabilities are often literally left out of the picture. Wherever appropriate, showing images of adults with disabilities along with images of other non-disabled adults promotes diversity and inclusion. This can be important for those children in the classroom whose parents have disabilities (i.e., my parent is included along with other types of parents). This can also be important for any children with disabilities in the classroom to see that they have a future as adults with disabilities. Besides doing an Internet image search for “adults with disabilities,” here are some suggested resources for photos and drawings of children and adults with disabilities.

[Coloring Pages for Kids](http://www.coloring-pages-kids.com/coloring-pages/family-people-jobs-coloring-pages/people-disabilities-coloring-pages/people-disabilities-coloring-pages-gallery.php) has free printable coloring pages, including some of children and adults with disabilities.

<http://www.coloring-pages-kids.com/coloring-pages/family-people-jobs-coloring-pages/people-disabilities-coloring-pages/people-disabilities-coloring-pages-gallery.php>

“Father Time Posters” from **Mojo** is a set of 11 colorful posters of diverse fathers from around the world. One poster features a father in a wheelchair. These posters are intended to encourage children to share those special and fun times with their fathers, grandfathers, uncles or other males in their lives. This resource can support language social skills and self-awareness skills. Search the web for availability from a variety of online companies.

In addition to pictures of adults with disabilities, some classrooms for younger children may have dolls or other toys that depict children and adults. Some companies specifically make figures that show children as well as adults with disabilities.

Lakeshore offers many educational products including books on differing abilities as well as has adult and children dolls with disabilities: <http://www.lakeshorelearning.com>

The Multicultural Toybox includes dolls with disabilities as well as accessories for dolls with disabilities:

<http://multiculturaltoybox.com/accessories-for-dolls-with-disabilities-and-some-dolls-with-disabilities/>

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Children with Disabilities. There are hundreds of publications and websites that offer suggestions to classroom teachers for creating awareness and inclusion of children with disabilities. Many of these can be ideas can easily be adapted and expanded to include adults with disabilities as well. Below are just a few examples:

Friends Who Care.

A Disability Awareness Program for Elementary Students (Easter Seals). A Free downloadable publication at

http://www.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ntl_friendswhocare

Kids' Corner.

A website site for young people, courtesy of the Center for Disability Information & Referral (CeDIR).

<http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/cedir/kidsweb/default.html>

Count Me In.

The COUNT ME IN puppet program is designed to help children and adults learn about disabilities and chronic illnesses in an effort to bridge the gap between typical students and those with disabilities.

<http://www.pacer.org/puppets/count.asp>

Kids on the Block.

The Kids on the Block has developed over 40 different programs addressing various disabilities, educational and medical differences, and social concerns.

<http://www.kotb.com/>

Additional materials for schools.

“Building Disability Awareness and Inclusion” is a webpage listing materials for schools, courtesy of the Kern County California Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA).

[http://kcsos.kern.org/SpecialEd/stories/storyReader\\$263](http://kcsos.kern.org/SpecialEd/stories/storyReader$263)

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Diversity. Many teachers devote special weeks or projects to create awareness of diverse races, ethnicities and religions. Consider adding families with disabilities as yet another example of diversity: families in which a child, parent, grandparent or other relative has a disability.

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Bullying. More and more schools are developing policies as well as education time concerning “bullying.” One group of children that can be targets of teasing or bullying are those who have parents with disabilities. This would be an excellent opportunity to discuss how differences such as having a parent with a disability can be positive and respected.

Suggested Books for Young Readers about Parents with Disabilities

Listed below are books for younger readers. Some of these books specifically focus on a parent or other adult family member with a specific type of disability. We have also included a few books about adults with disabilities who are not necessarily parents because there are so few books that specifically highlight parents with disabilities. Other books listed here include a parent or adult family member with a disability as one of several characters in the book. In some cases, the parent or adult with a disability may only make a brief appearance in the story. However, those stories can help normalize awareness about parents and adults with disabilities – suggesting that they are just one of many different kinds of people in the world. When stipulated by the publisher, the age or reading level is also included.

Damon, Emma

All Kinds of Babies

Tango Books (England), 2009. www.tangobooks.co.uk

This lift-flap book celebrates all kinds of babies from different countries and from different kinds of families. It looks at how babies are welcomed into the world, are carried, play, sleep and more. One of the examples illustrated in this book shows a parent in a wheelchair with a baby on her lap.

Age level: 3 yrs and up

Peters, Polly

It's Raining! It's Pouring! We're Exploring!

Child's Play (Sydney Australia), 2007. www.childs-play.com

When bad weather prevents three children from playing outside, they figure out ways to entertain themselves. With a few home-made props and a great deal of imagination, they hatch the perfect plan. The imaginative play is captured both in text and illustrations.

The book shows a mom with a Canadian crutch who is cooking in the kitchen.

Rescek, Sanja

Touch and Tickle

Child's Play (Sydney Australia), 2008. www.childs-play.com

This book is designed to be read to very young children, promoting feelings of security and confidence. Massage has been shown to encourage relaxation, enhance sleep, improve circulation and digestion, and aid pain relief. The rhymes are associated with physical play activities. The illustrations include a parent in a wheelchair with a baby on her lap.

Pittar, Gill

Milly, Molly and Different Dads

MM House Publishing (New Zealand), 2002. books@millymolly.com

This book is one of a series of Millie & Molly books written to promote the acceptance of diversity and the acceptance of family diversity. This book describes and illustrates a variety of fathers, including a dad who uses a wheelchair, a blind dad and a deaf dad.

Birkett, Georgie

Grow It!

Child's Play (Sydney Australia), 2009. www.childs-play.com

One of a series of Helping Hands books, helping with real tasks is a natural progression from pretend play, and is a crucial stage in a child's development. Simple conversational text and lively illustrations encourage dialogue between reader and child. This book focuses on growing and caring for plants. Illustrations include an adult woman who uses a wheelchair. Disabled adults (not necessarily parents) have a very slight presence in a couple of other books in the series: **Cook It!** shows a blind passerby with a guide dog, and **Clean It!** shows a man using an inhaler.

English, Jennifer

My Mommy's Special

Children's Press, 1985.

This book is out of print. Although the photographs are fairly dated, it is one of very few books geared for younger readers that specifically talk about the experience of having a mother with a disability. The author's mom had multiple sclerosis and used a wheelchair.

Alexander, Sally Hobart.

Do You Remember the Color Blue?

Viking, 2000.

A writer who went blind at age twenty-six answers questions that children have frequently asked during her visits to schools. She discusses reading, working with her guide dog, meeting her husband, and parenting her two children, as well as her reactions to being blind.

Grade level: 5 to 7

Bruchac, Joseph.

My Father is Taller than a Tree.

Dial Books for Young Readers

Thirteen unique father-and-son pairs come from diverse backgrounds and live in different places. Even though they are not all the same, their relationships show us an important truth: Even the simplest and most familiar activities become special when dads and kids do them together. Two of the boys have a disabled father (one is blind, the other uses a wheelchair).

Age Level: 3 and up

Mama Zooms

Scholastic Inc, 1995.

When a toddler sits on his mother's lap, he pictures himself transformed into a jockey racing across green lawns, a ship captain negotiating stormy seas, a smooth race car driver, a pilot whipped by wind in an open airplane, a train engineer peering down a dark tunnel. But this is no ordinary lap of pretend, because Mama has a "zooming machine"--a wheelchair that transports mother and child to work and play and, best of all, far away realms of the imagination.

Age Level: Preschool

Knowlton, Laurie Lazzaro.

A Young Man's Dance.

Boyd's Mills Press, 2006.

Grandma Ronnie's grandson misses baking cookies and dancing with her now that she lives in a nursing home, uses a wheelchair, and doesn't recognize people. After several visits, Ronnie finds a special way to reconnect with his grandmother.

Grade level: kindergarten to grade 3.

Uhlberg, Myron.

Dad, Jackie, and Me.

Peachtree, 2005.

Brooklyn, New York; 1947. A boy learns about discrimination and tolerance as he and his father who is deaf share their enthusiasm over baseball and the Dodgers' first African American player, Jackie Robinson.

For grades 2 to 4.

Uhlberg, Myron.

The Printer.

Peachtree, 2003.

A young boy describes his deaf father's heroism when a fast spreading fire broke out at the newspaper factory. Working in the noisy pressroom, his father used sign language to alert other deaf workers of the danger so they could save their hearing colleagues.

For grades 2 to 4.

Weeks, Sarah.

So B. It.

Laura Geringer Books, 2004.

After spending her life with her mother with an intellectual disability and an agoraphobic neighbor, twelve-year-old Heidi sets out from Reno, Nevada, to New York state to find out who she is. With the help of some old photographs she uncovers family secrets.

For grades 6 to 9.

Articles or Books for Adults regarding Parents with Disabilities

Below are articles and books for a wide readership that are available from Through the Looking Glass about parents with disabilities. These include materials about Deaf parents, blind parents, parents with physical disabilities, parents with intellectual disabilities. These materials are all available either as free downloads on Through the Looking Glass' website, or at cost and can be purchased through our website.

Bacon, Debbie

Hands-On Parenting: A Resource Guide for Parents Who Are Blind or Partially Sighted

Berkeley, CA: Through the Looking Glass (2009)

This book, written by a blind mother of three, includes thoughts and suggestions contributed by blind parents from all over the country. Topics include infant care, toilet training, games and recreation, safety, and much more.

Conley-Jung, Connie and Rhoda Olkin

Mothers with visual impairments who are raising young children.

Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 96(1), 14-29. (2001)

Corbus, Kathie, Sherrie Hansen et al

Strategies and Adaptations in Working with Parents with Intellectual Disabilities

Berkeley, CA: Through the Looking Glass (2006) [19 pages]

This guide provides helpful information and concrete ideas for working successfully with parents with intellectual disabilities.

Kaye, H. Steven

Current Demographics of Parents with Disabilities in the U.S.

Berkeley, CA: Through the Looking Glass, 2012.

This free-online report provides a breakdown of the estimates and other characteristics of parents with disabilities in each state and county. Go to www.lookingglass.org

Kirshbaum, Megan

Family context and disability culture reframing: Through the Looking Glass.

The Family Psychologist, 10(4), 8-12. (1994)

This article addresses the ways in which families with disabilities are pathologized and traumatized by the assumptions made by clinicians and medical personnel. She shows how incorporation of disability culture, which is transmitted through peers, rather than through generations, transforms intervention processes and outcomes. Using case examples she eloquently demonstrates how therapy is enhanced by knowledge of disability culture and experience.

Kirshbaum, Megan and Rhoda Olkin.

Parents with physical, systemic or visual disabilities.

Sexuality and Disability, 20(1), 65-80. (2002)

There are millions of families with children living in the home in which a parent has a disability. When discussing a group as large and heterogeneous as parents with disabilities it is important to keep in mind the diversity of this population. This article covers three areas, including (a) the main problems in previous research on parents with disabilities, (b) research in a new key, i.e., from a disability culture and community perspective, and (c) an overview of the clinical and research work at Through the Looking Glass.

Preston, Paul

Mother Father Deaf: Living Between Sound and Silence

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (1994) 278 pages.

Based upon interviews with 150 adult hearing children of deaf parents, this national study examines the family life and the cultural experiences of growing up with deaf parents.

Rogers, Judi

The Disabled Woman's Guide to Pregnancy and Birth.

New York: Demos. (2005)

This comprehensive guide is based on the experiences of ninety women with disabilities who chose to have children. This book is a practical guide both for disabled women planning for pregnancy and the health professionals who work with them.

Singleton, Jenny and Matthew Tittle

Deaf parents and their hearing children.

Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education: 5:3 Summer 2000

16 pages. (2000)

An article discussing the cultural and educational factors to be considered in working with hearing children of deaf parents.

Toms Barker, Linda and Vida Maralani

Challenges and strategies of disabled parents: Findings from a national survey of parents with disabilities.

Oakland, CA: Berkeley Planning Associates. (1997)

This milestone TLG-directed report presents findings from the first national survey of parents with disabilities. The report includes a description of parents with disabilities, barriers to parenting among adults with disabilities, transportation issues, personal assistance, adaptive parenting equipment, housing, as well as recommendations for legal and service system changes.

Rocking the Cradle: Ensuring the Rights of Parents with Disabilities and Their Children.

This 2012 groundbreaking policy study from the National Council on Disability was given to the President and Congress, and was developed with substantial contribution from Through the Looking Glass. It is available for free at:

<http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2012/Sep272012/>.

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Developed and written by: Paul Preston, Megan Kirshbaum, Sherrie Hansen and Ella Callow.

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Through the Looking Glass

**3075 Adeline Street, Suite 120
Berkeley, CA 94703**

Toll-Free within the U.S. (800) 644-2666

Local/International (510) 848-1112

TTY: (510) 848-1005

FAX: (510) 848-4445

email: tlg@lookingglass.org

website: www.lookingglass.org