

What Does the Research Say About Parent to Parent?

Research has shown that parent to parent peer support is an evidence based, essential component of health care. Several research studies attest to the efficacy of parent to parent peer support as part of a program of comprehensive care for children and youth with special health care needs or disabilities (CYSHCN).

Peer support is so effective in part because of the equal and mutually beneficial relationship created through the sharing of experiences and knowledge with others who have faced or are facing similar challenges. (CA Health Report, 2008). After receiving emotional support and information, parents have shown increased confidence in parenting their children with special needs (Singer et al.). Increases in self-efficacy, in turn, are associated with a variety of improvements in health care utilization and participation at all levels of planning from individual medical planning for a child to organizational planning for a clinic (Wagner, Austin, & Von Korff, 1996).

In another study of parent to parent peer support, the focus was on parents of young children with disabilities. It found that mothers who participated in parent to parent programs in five different states had increases in their sense of being effective parents, had increases in their positive attitudes about their children and family, and

they made more progress on meeting specific needs than parents in a comparison group.

Peer support benefits the giver as well as receiver of support. The California Health Report speaks to "the growing evidence that providing social support to others may result in health benefits comparable or even greater than receiving support." Individuals, who provide social support through volunteering experience less depression, heightened self-esteem and self-efficacy as well as improved health behaviors and health outcomes (Walker, 2006).

The support both given and received by another parent has been termed "the cradle of leadership" because it is often through this relationship that parents discover within themselves their voice for advocacy.

Confident, knowledgeable parents are better able to partner with providers and increase their skills to become involved in program planning and policy.

Family Voices of Minnesota will add to the body of knowledge about the outcomes of parent to parent support and information through the research that will be conducted as part of our

new Maternal Child Health Bureau Grant. The outcomes of this project expect to show significant increases in parent's self-efficacy related to providing care and access to care for their children.

The Family Voices Parent to Parent Grant Program will provide opportunities for parents from underserved and underrepresented communities to build on their strengths by offering training for emerging leaders in policy, health care financing, advocacy and other areas of leadership development.

Family Voices of Minnesota Parent to Parent (P2P) program uses the best practice guidelines established by Parent to Parent USA. These guidelines are based on the body of research that also show the importance of providing structured training for parents providing support and information, along with systematic follow-up with both the referred parent and the parent providing support. (Singer et al, 1999).

To learn more or get involved in the Family Voices Parent to Parent Program contact: Family Voices of MN: 612-210-5547, toll free 1-866-334-8444 or by e-mail: P2P@familyvoicesofminnesota.org.

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