



Presents

**Starting and Maintaining
Parent Support Groups
Webinar 9/17/20**

KY-SPIN
(Special Parent Involvement Network)
Parent Training & Information (PTI)
Center

Funded by the U.S. Dept. of Education under IDEA since 1988 when Kentucky first received a PTI. KY-SPIN Parent Center provides training, information and support for children and youth with all types of disabilities (birth through 26 years old), their parents, families, and professionals.



We do NOT:
Act as Attorneys

We DO:



- ♥ Empower Families to Effectively Advocate for their Children
- ♥ Provide peer support to help families access needed information and resources

Starting a Parent Support Group can start from something as simple as a "Mommy and Me" class for local families whose babies have a health condition or early diagnosis of a developmental disability.



It could begin as an informal gathering, a tea or a park day, with only introductions on the agenda, or a plan to create a list of topics of common interest. Now a virtual support group could even be something to consider for families to share with each other.

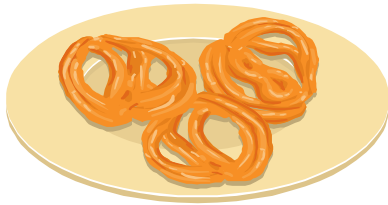


Virtual Support Groups

Here are a few resources you should check:

- Yahoo! Groups (<http://groups.yahoo.com>)
I typed in “*heart attack*” and found a category called “Heart Diseases.” Clicking on that category, I found over 60 support groups listed.
- Facebook Groups (<http://facebook.com>) – these are easy to create and then you can invite people to your group. You can also attach files and even to live videos and interact with others.
- Google Search Engine (<http://www.google.com>)
I typed in “*Autism Support Group*” and found a lot of a few support groups to look at.
- Zoom (<http://zoom.us>) Zoom is a wonderful platform that you can use to create a support group and then others connect with a special link the admin provides.



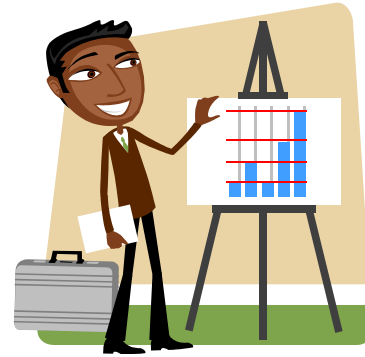


Meeting in Person

Provide an inviting atmosphere, simple snacks and drinks, and scheduling help to come set up and stay to clean up gets many groups off to a good start.

You may invite speakers to give a short presentation and answer questions about:

- Parenting strategies
- Child development
- Physical or speech therapy
- Stress management
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Siblings of persons with disability
- Experiences educating children in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)



Speakers can also be invited to a virtual support group meeting.

Isolation is a problem for all families, and it is never felt more keenly than when a family feels “different.”

Covid-19 has made many families feel isolated during these difficult times. Even a virtual support group is a good way to bring people together and help with the feeling of isolation.



Inviting New Members

When you begin to plan how you will recruit new members for a first meeting, you should take into consideration location, day and time, and how you will publicize the meeting.

- **Location**
- **Day and Time**
- **Publicity**

Facebook and Instagram posts are a great way to share information. Also other online groups that can share your information is another great way to get the word out.



Invitation Letter & Questionnaire



You could even send this out to families via email or also using a social media platform. Finding out what needs families have can help you determine the type of support group you should begin. Will it be informational and resource based or support and sharing based.

Planning the First Meeting

- **Arrange the meeting space**
- **Have a sign-in sheet**
- **Develop the meeting content**



Tips for Setting the Tone

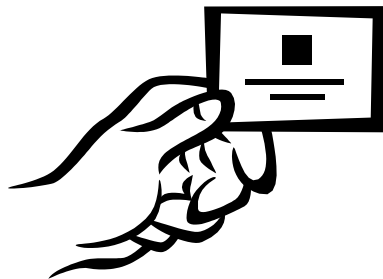


When you plan for your group you want to set the right tone and create an atmosphere that is inviting. Keep the three Fs in mind: food, family, and fun.

First Meeting Tips



- **Smile**
- **Don't move faster than the group**
- **Give new members something to take home**
- **Tell people how they will be notified of the next meeting**
- **End on a positive note**



Quick reminders for the meeting facilitator

- Be positive
- Set ground rules
- Engage everyone in the first 5–10 minutes
- Have a beginning, middle, and end to each meeting
- Be aware of yourself and others
- Know that 10% of our communication is verbal and 90% is nonverbal
- Accept that conflict is normal; work through it remain committed to the group process



Evaluating the Success of Your First Meeting

Your leadership circle should take time to evaluate the success of your first meeting & use the information to help plan for future meetings. Before the end of the meeting, ask the group these 2 questions? Either have them write their answers down or share publicly.



- "What worked for you?"
- "What could we do better?" Note any themes.

Developing Group Identity and Activities

The planning process involves four major steps:

- Clarifying Identity
- Building a Foundation
- Choosing Activities & Developing a Work Plan
- Tracking Progress



There are several types of Groups

Comparing Group Types

<i>type of group</i>	<i>reason for existence</i>	<i>purpose</i>	<i>program/services</i>	<i>structure</i>
Frustration Venting Group	parents have a problem with the child welfare system	enable parents to air problems, share frustrations, meet their short-term needs	discussing what is wrong with the system and how it affects family	informal (no officers, few defined activities, parents often involved for only a short time)
Mutual Support Group	parents need advice and resources from one another	help families address adoption issues or child's special needs; provide long-term emotional support	social events, brainstorming solutions to challenges, sharing emotional support, validating adoption experience	semi-formal (group may have officers, but not likely to be incorporated and has limited funding)
Service Group	parents see way to fill gaps in family services	provide helpful support services to families and/or children in the community	offering workshops, printed resources, post-adoption services; recruiting prospective adopters	formal (group has bylaws, nonprofit status, seeks grants or contracts)
Advocacy Group	parents see problems in child welfare system and identify possible solutions	change the child welfare system to better serve children and families in their local region, state/ province, or country	working for policy and practice changes at local, provincial/ state, or national levels; educating policymakers and others about family needs	formal (group has nonprofit status, seeks funds, has strategic plan, has broader membership and board representation than adoptive parents)

Evolution of Groups



Over time, some groups evolve in a linear fashion (as shown below), starting as a frustration venting group and eventually becoming an advocacy group.

Frustration Venting » Mutual Support » Service » Advocacy

Other groups don't move in a linear way. Some groups may remain a mutual support group for their entire existence if that is their members' goal.

Every group decides what its purpose is and how it will serve families.

If you still have
questions...



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