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FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH CHRONIC HEALTH NEEDS CAN FIND THE SERVICES THEY NEED

September 3, 2009 by cpehrson

All children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) require health and related services that go beyond those of children without disabilities, due to their chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions.

The families of children with these extraordinary needs often find themselves uncertain where to go for the answers and services that are desperately required to help their children. Many families face immense frustration as they try to find and access the many services their children need.

Some of the barriers that can leave families feeling overwhelmed include: eligibility requirements, policies, procedures, and multiple locations. There are often gaps in services due to agencies that provide limited services, and duplication in services from multiple coordinators and service plans may also occur. Needing to travel great distances to obtain specialized services may also be a challenge for families.

Champions for Inclusive Communities (ChampionsInC) is a national center that is housed at the Early Intervention Research Institute, a division of the Center for Persons with Disabilities at USU, that supports communities in organizing services for families of CYSHCN. Organized community-based service systems will help families find the services and resources they need easily and to their satisfaction as these barriers are removed.

Communities that have an organized system of community-based services have the following components:

- Families have access to appropriate services and supports in their community.
- Services are coordinated between all providers.
- Families receive supports such as coordinated service plans or care coordinators.
- Families are connected to necessary services via a streamlined enrollment process.
- Families are satisfied with the services and supports they receive.
- Partnerships work to develop service systems at the community level.

Many communities across the nation are trying hard to facilitate this process for families of CYSHCN by putting into place many of these components. For families who would like to know what services are offered in their state, you can find a state summary with a listing of all service providers in your state by going to the ChampionsInC website.

Families in Utah can view Utah CYSHCN information at http://www.championsinc.org/resources/stateInformation.cfm?st=UT