Parent Centers Empower Parents

Center for Persons With Disabilities
The U.S. Department of Education just announced the award of more than $5 million in funding to operate 19 special education Parent Training and Information (PTI) Centers in 13 states and Puerto Rico.

Every state in the U.S. has at least one PTI Center, which helps inform and support parents as they work to provide the best educational situation possible for their children identified with a disability.

“Parent Centers help families better understand their child's disability and can often connect them to important local, state and national resources,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “These centers will play a vital role in empowering parents and families to learn about appropriate early interventions and special education services.”

The Utah Parent Center, located in Salt Lake City, provides a valuable service for parents in Utah. Besides providing online resources, including a 504 Handbook, a Disability Resource Book, an IEP (Individual Education Plan) Parent Handbook, and a Transition Handbook, they offer an electronic newsletter that is published monthly. Other materials include fact sheets on a variety of important topics such as Taking a Stand Against Bullying, videos, a listing of state services, and Utah's Special Education Rules.

They also provide a wide assortment of free trainings, webinars, and presentations for parents and professionals including such topics as Parents as Partners in the IEP Process, Schoolwide Assessments, and Positive Behavioral Supports. Many of these are archived on their web site and can be viewed online.

On the Utah Parent Center web site, parents can find out about local and state events that are planned specifically for children with disabilities and their families. One event that they collaborate on with other agencies in Utah is the annual Family Links Conferences that brings together providers and parents and a host of presenters and resources. This is a good opportunity to network with other parents and learn about the many services and resources available to them.

One of the purposes of the Utah Center is to connect parents with other parents who can provide empathy, share information, and strengthen families based on the concept of parents helping other parents. They support this through their Family to Family Network, a grassroots volunteer organization composed of family members from across the state that have a relative with a disability.

Parent Training and Information Centers are designed to arm parents with the information, training, and support they need to direct their children's health care and education and help them live inclusive, productive lives.

To look up the PTI Center in your area, click here.