

Oklahoma Parents Center

Spring 2011



Mission Statement

Oklahoma Parents Center is dedicated to the inclusion and **equality of children** and adults with disabilities. Our mission is to train, inform, educate, and **support parents**, families, professionals and consumers in **building partnerships** that **meet the needs** of children and youth with the full range of disabilities ages birth through twenty-six.

5th Annual Statewide Conference

We would like to announce our upcoming 5th Annual Statewide Conference **"Building Relationships...Creating Successful Change"** on **Thursday, April 14th, 2011**. The conference will be held in Oklahoma City at the Marriott Hotel, located at 3233 NW Expressway. Our main speaker will be Geri Jewel, a national speaker on disabilities. Some of you may remember her as Cousin Geri from "The Facts of Life" or Jewell from "Deadwood". By sharing her disability as her greatest blessing, and revealing insights about the world as she sees it, Geri turns the focus from disabilities to a true celebration of ability, resulting in an inspiring, empowering and healing experience.

We are delighted to welcome back Chris Burke from the television show "Life Goes On" along with John and Joe DeMasi. Their musical presentation, "Everyone Can Be A...Singer With The Band", is designed to show young and old alike that everyone is special, that everyone has a song to sing and that what truly matters in life is your ability, not your disability.

This is a free conference, however space is limited. Therefore, if you haven't registered please do so by calling **877-553-4332** or **www.OklahomaParentsCenter.org**. We look forward to seeing you there!!

Registration will be available on March 1, 2011

R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Not just an Aretha Franklin Song!

Adapted From: simpleasthat.com by **Deborah Capone**, President and CEO, As Simple As That

Recently, as I was about to begin yet another diatribe with my daughter about respect, I had the presence of mind to ask her if she knew what respect meant. Interestingly enough, she didn't. **Wow, talk about a lack of communication.** I may as well have been speaking Swahili. No wonder I found myself harping on 'respect'.

Together we went to look for a definition of '**respect**' and here is what we found:

- 1) A feeling of appreciative, often deferential regard; esteem.
- 2) The state of being regarded with honor or esteem.
- 3) Willingness to show consideration or appreciation.

We started to talk about the practical applications of respect and determined that there are two kinds of respect. The first kind is being polite-saying "Please and Thank you", "May I be excused" and some of the other social niceties. Here respect can be the objective and unbiased considerations of concrete things, i.e. "we don't color in books in our house because books are treasures." Or in the more abstract it is not interrupting, using respectful language and tone of voice and respecting the diversity that is all around us. I began thinking about the yin and yang of respect and bias. At the end of the day, our thoughts and feelings belong to us; it is our behavior towards others that counts in the world. I realized that it wasn't enough to talk about respect-just like it is not enough to talk about bias. **Both require action and we start at the beginning: ourselves.**

The first step to gaining your child's respect is for you, as a parent, to fully comprehend that behaving respectfully means more than good manners. Once you get there then we need to apply the same rigor to teaching respect as we do to helping our children see past biases.

Walk the walk and talk the talk: We are all too aware that we are our children's first and most powerful role models. James Baldwin word's ring true: "*Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.*" To get respect, you have to show it. If you tell your child you're going to do something-positive or negative-do it. Monitor off-hand comments that denigrate another person-even if it seems 'harmless.' When we bark 'get off the road you old bag' at a senior citizen in front of us, we are giving our kids the signal that it is ok to disrespect senior citizens.



Remember you are the parent: While seemingly easy, in my house my daughter has too much power. After working, running around and taking care of three dogs and my rambunctious daughter it is sometimes just *easier* to let things go. I have been known to resort to that all time favorite phrase "because I said so" I am working on explaining and negotiating less and moderating the old standby to be a bit more loving. "There's no candy before dinner because I need to do my job as a mom" tends to get me farther with my daughter and gives her clearer boundaries and limits. In some cases, if my daughter does not know she is being rude (a pass-along from me, perhaps?) I say, "That tone of voice was out of line. Please stop now." Truthfully, I have to sometimes consciously remember to say please."

Create immediate consequences consistently: There are no more powerful words for a child than "Because you spoke rudely, there'll be no Nintendo DS or TV tonight." My daughter consistently begs for a 'second chance. I often give her that second chance (remember me, looking for the "*easy way*"). This gives her more power than she can handle. That is an awfully scary place for a kid, is *really* looking to the adult to be the adult.

Be the "Spin Doctor": We all fare better when we stop expressing ourselves disrespectfully. I get angry when my daughter says things like "You are so boring. I want a play date." I know a friend can trump mom at times, but the rub is in the disrespectful way she speaks. Typically, she will have an opportunity to re-phrase her request. And after getting my not-so-subtle prompt she says "I really don't want to (fill in the blank). Can we call Olivia and see if I can play with her while you are gone?"

Praise Respectful Behavior: Positive reinforcement goes a long way-for kids and adults. We all want our feeling validated and help untangling issues. Wait until everyone involved has calmed down and work together to form strategies to handle situations more respectfully.

It's a process: It doesn't happen overnight and there are always bumps in the road. Give yourself and your children permission to make mistakes.

If You Think There's a Problem with Reading

Adapted From: *Helping Your Child Become a Reader*, U.S. Department of Education

Your child may resist being read to or joining with you in reading activities. If so, **keep trying the activities, but keep them playful**. Remember that children vary a great deal in the ways that they learn. Don't be concerned if your child doesn't enjoy a certain activity that her friend of the same age loves. It is important, though, to keep an eye on how your child is progressing.



When a child is having a language or reading problem, the reason might be simple to understand and deal with or it might be complicated and require expert help. Often, children may just need more time to develop their language skills. On the other hand, **some children might have trouble seeing, hearing, or speaking**. Others may have a learning disability. If you think your child may have some kind of physical or learning problem, it is important to get expert help quickly.

If your child is in school and you think that she should have stronger language skills, ask for a private meeting with her teacher. (You may feel more comfortable taking a friend, relative, or someone else in your community with you.) In most cases, the teacher or perhaps the principal will be able to help you to understand how your child is doing and what you might do to help her.

There is a law—the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**—that may allow you to get certain services for your child from your school district. Your child might qualify to receive help from a speech and language therapist or other specialist, or she might qualify to receive materials designed to match her needs. You can learn about your special education rights and responsibilities by requesting that the school give you—in your first language—a summary of legal rights. To find out about programs for children with disabilities that are available in your state, contact the Oklahoma Parents Center, Inc. toll-free at **877-553-4332** or visit us at www.OklahomaParentsCenter.org.

The good news is that no matter how long it takes, **most children can learn to read**. Parents, teachers, and other professionals can work together to determine if a child has a learning disability or other problem, and then provide the right help as soon as possible. When a child gets such help, chances are very good that she will develop the skills she needs to succeed in school and in life.

Nothing is more important than your support for your child as she goes through school! Make sure she gets any extra help she needs as soon as possible, and always encourage her and praise her efforts.

How to Talk with Educators at Your Child's School About Bullying: Tips for Parents of Bullied Children

Reprint from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Health Resources and Services Administration
www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov

Bullying among children is aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power and strength. Parents are often reluctant to report to educators that their child is being bullied. Why?

- Parents may be unsure how best to help their child and may be afraid that they will make the situation worse if they report bullying.
- They may be embarrassed that their child is being bullied.
- Sometimes, children ask parents not to report bullying.
- Parents may fear being seen as overprotective.
- They may believe that it is up to their child to stop the bullying.

Children and youth often need help to stop bullying!

Parents should never be afraid to call the school to report that their child is being bullied and ask for help to stop the bullying. Students should not have to tolerate bullying at school any more than adults would tolerate similar treatment at work.

The school's responsibility

All children are entitled to courteous and respectful treatment by students and staff at school. Educators have a duty to ensure that students have a safe learning environment. Fortunately, most educators take their responsibilities to stop bullying very seriously. Several states have passed anti-bullying laws and require public schools to have an anti-bullying program in place. Ask for a copy of your school's policy or check the student handbook to see whether your school has policies that will help resolve the problem.

Working with your child's school to solve the problem

If your child tells you that he or she has been bullied or if you suspect your child is being bullied, what can you do?

- Keep a written record of all bullying incidents that your child reports to you. Record the names of the children involved, where and when the bullying occurred, and what happened.
- Immediately ask to meet with your child's classroom teacher and explain your concerns in a friendly, non confrontational way.
- Ask the teacher about his or her observations:
 - Has he or she noticed or suspected bullying?
 - How is your child getting along with others in class?
 - Has he or she noticed that your child is being isolated, excluded from playground or other activities with students?
- Ask the teacher what he or she intends to do to investigate and help to stop the bullying.
- If you are concerned about how your child is coping with the stress of being bullied, ask to speak with your child's guidance counselor or other school-based mental health professional.
- Set up a follow-up appointment with the teacher to discuss progress.
- If there is no improvement after reporting bullying to your child's teacher, speak with the school principal.
- Keep notes from your meetings with teachers and administrators.



How to Talk with Educators at Your Child's School About Bullying: Tips for Parents of Bullied Children (Cont.)

What can you expect staff at your child's school to do about bullying?

School staff should investigate the bullying immediately. After investigating your concerns, they should inform you as to what they plan to do about it.

- School staff should never have a joint meeting with your child and the child who bullied them. This could be very embarrassing and intimidating for your child. They should not refer the children to mediation. Bullying is a form of victimization, not a conflict. It should not be mediated.
- Staff should meet with your child to learn about the bullying that he or she has experienced. They should develop a plan to help keep your child safe, and they should be watchful for any future bullying. Educators should assure your child that they will work hard to see that the bullying stops.
- School personnel should meet with the children who are suspected of taking part in the bullying.
- They should make it clear to these children that bullying is against school rules and will not be tolerated. If appropriate, they should administer consequences (such as a loss of recess privileges) to the children who bullied and notify their parents.
- Educators and parents should be careful not to “blame the victim.” Bullying is never the “fault” of the child who is bullied, and he or she shouldn't be made to feel responsible for being bullied.
- However, if your child is impulsive or lacks social skills, talk with a school counselor. It is possible that some students who are bullying your child are reacting out of annoyance. This doesn't make the bullying right, but it may help to explain why your child is being bullied.
- Give the school reasonable time to investigate and hear both sides of the story. Sometimes, a child who bullies will make false allegations about a child as an additional way of bullying them. Educators should not jump to hasty conclusions and assign blame without a

thorough assessment of the situation. This entire process should not take longer than a week.

- If bullying continues, write to the school's principal or administrator and include evidence from your notes to back up your complaint.
- Putting a complaint in writing is important so there is a record of your concern.
- Most administrators and staff are responsive to bullying concerns. However, if your school administrator is unable or unwilling to stop the bullying, write to your school superintendent for assistance.
- Be persistent. You may need to keep speaking out about the bullying that your child experiences.

You Can Make A Difference!

When should law enforcement become involved?

- Consider involving the police if another child has physically assaulted your child or is seriously threatening him or her with bodily injury.
- If the problem persists or escalates and your school officials are unable to stop the bullying, you may want to consult an attorney.
- Ask the school to keep a written record of all offenses committed against your child in case law enforcement officials need the information for further complaints.

Bullying prevention

- Bullying happens in every school, but with an effective bullying prevention program, bullying can be reduced. If your child is being bullied, chances are that there are other children in the school who are having similar experiences.
- If your school does not have official anti-bullying policies or an active bullying prevention program, work with other parents and your school officials to develop one.

Respite Care Voucher Program

Source: Family Connections by OASIS, A Newsletter for Families, Winter 2010 Edition

There are more than 370,000 unpaid family caregivers in Oklahoma who are providing more than 400 million hours of care worth around \$3.5 million dollars for someone with a disability or special need. The caregiver can be a parent, grandparent, spouse, adult child or other family member or friend. Respite is a break from full-time caregiving and as studies show, it can improve the wellbeing of both the caregiver and the person they are caring for. The Respite Voucher Program through OASIS provides financial assistance to caregivers in the form of vouchers that can be used to pay others for respite care so the caregiver can take that needed break.



Those who may be eligible for the program include:

- **Grandparents raising grandchildren** or other relative as parent. Grandparents must be over 55 or the grandchild must have a developmental disability
- Caregivers including spouses, adult children or other relative caring for a person age 60 or older who needs assistance with daily living due to **chronic health problems** including Alzheimer's, dementia or other health conditions.
- Families who have **adopted a child with special health care needs** who was once in the custody of the Department of Human Services (DHS).
- Families with a member of any age with a **developmental disability** who is on the Waiting List but NOT receiving either the Home and Community Based Waiver, the In Home Support Waiver, or the Family Support Assistance Program (\$250 monthly payment). Income guidelines will apply.
- Families who have a child receiving SSI and services through the **SSI-Disabled Children's Program (SSI/DCP)** at DHS.

To find out more and to apply, call toll-free at **888-771-4550** or in the OKC Metro area 405-271-4550 and request a **Respite Voucher application**. The person you talk to will need to ask you a few questions to determine if you qualify for the program.



Adapted from www.Voices4Hope.wikispaces.com

Voices4Hope (www.Voices4Hope.wikispaces.com) is a place for teenagers and young adults with mental health challenges to talk with each other and gain access to information that will help them live **happily and independently**. You can also learn about new research that is being conducted for people like you. Also, discussions may bring up new ideas in the minds of young adults. How cool is that!? This site has been created and maintained by a group of four young adults who are currently involved with research concerning the needs of people ages 14 to 30 who have **mental health challenges**.

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Spotlight Employee

In September 2009, the Oklahoma Parent's Center welcomed Andrea Stamper.

Andrea is the mother of two children, Kelsey and Karson. Her daughter Kelsey, now 12 years old, was born three months premature weighing a mere 0 lbs 15 oz. She is a beautiful and vivacious young lady diagnosed with severe cerebral palsy. Her son, Karson, now 9 years old, was born one month premature with a unilateral cleft lip and palate. Both children are SoonerStart graduates and are currently very successful in their school environment.



A strong quality Andrea brings forth is her experience and familiarity of Oklahoma's Early Intervention Services, SoonerStart. She was promoted as the Part C Coordinator, allowing her to focus on assisting and empowering the families of Oklahoma's youngest, birth to three. Thanks to our collaborative efforts with SoonerStart, Head Start, and the State Department of Education we are successfully reaching these families earlier.

"My job is to give families the tools necessary to be knowledgeable and positive advocates for their loved ones with unique needs – that makes me feel good about what I do. I take great pride in being part of an organization that is so committed to the inclusion and equality of children and adults with unique needs. I applaud the efforts of ALL the employees at the Oklahoma Parent's Center for their hard work and dedication to our mission," commented Andrea.

After the birth of my daughter, a dear friend once told me... "Attend every training opportunity you can to familiarize yourself with both the services available and her disability in order to be her best advocate." Often times I would question the relevancy of my attendance, only to find that in due time I was reflecting back on the words and wisdom from those opportunities. That's the best advice I can pass on to Oklahoma families.

Ask the Advocate!

Q: I recently asked my school to evaluate my child for a learning disability. The district SAID they are required to use Response to Intervention (RTI) before they could evaluate. My question is; what is RTI and what does it mean for my child?

A: RTI is a tiered process of instruction that allows schools to identify struggling students early and provide appropriate instructional interventions. Early intervention means more chances for success and less need for special education services. RTI would also address the needs of children who previously did not qualify for special education. RTI is only to be used when assessing students whom they suspect may have a specific learning disability (SLD).

- ◆ All children should receive appropriate and adequate instruction in the regular education classroom **before** being referred to special education.
- ◆ The RTI process **does not** replace the need for a comprehensive evaluation. School districts must not use the RTI process as a delay/denial method NOT to evaluate children.
- ◆ When a child is participating in an RTI model, parents must be notified of the instructional strategies used, performance data collected, and the general education services that will be provided.
- ◆ At any time during the RTI process, the parent has the right to request a comprehensive evaluation be conducted.
- ◆ Schools must promptly request parental consent to evaluate when a child suspected of having an SLD has not made progress when provided with appropriate instruction.

Once a parent has requested an evaluation, (we encourage you to request in writing) the school district is required to obtain the parent's signature for testing. Once the consent has been signed by the parent, the school has forty-five (45) school days to complete the evaluation.

I hope this has answered your question. Please feel free to call the **Oklahoma Parents Center**, toll free at **877-553-4332** if you would like any further assistance.

Source: OSEP Memo, January 21, 2011, "A Response to Intervention (RTI) Process Cannot Be Used to Delay-Deny an Evaluation for Eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)"



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March 3 rd	Owasso H.S. Transition Fair* <u>Owasso</u> *5:00 p.m.
March 7 th	What You Need To Know About Special Education* <u>Okmulgee</u> *5:30 p.m.
March 7 th	Communication Workshop* <u>Tulsa</u> *10:00 a.m.
March 8 th	What You Need to Know About Special Education* <u>McAlester</u> *5:30 p.m.
March 10 th	Bullying Prevention Workshop* <u>Vinita</u> *6:00 p.m.
March 17 th	Journey to Adulthood, Part 2* <u>Okmulgee</u> *6:00 p.m.
March 21 st – 22 nd	Governor's Conference on Developmental Disabilities* <u>Norman</u> *All Day
March 22 nd	Transition to Adulthood* <u>Tahlequah</u> *3:30 p.m.
March 24 th	Norman North H.S. Transition Fair* <u>Norman</u> *4:30 p.m.
March 24 th	What You Need to Know About Special Education* <u>Stigler</u> *6:30 p.m.
March 28 th	Communication Workshop* <u>Tulsa</u> *6:30 p.m.
March 29 th	OASIS "On the Road"* <u>Okmulgee</u> *All Day
April 4 th	Transition from School to Adult Life* <u>Tulsa</u> *10:00 a.m.
April 7 th	Bullying Prevention Workshop* <u>Miami</u> *5:30 p.m.
April 9 th	2 nd Annual Autism Walk* <u>Broken Bow</u> *9:00 a.m.
April 14 th	Oklahoma Parents Center's 5 th Annual Conference* <u>OKC</u> *All Day

CALENDAR OF EVENTS