

Don't Go it Alone

Special needs. What exactly does that mean? If you've living with someone with special needs, or know someone who has special needs, you may be well aware of the challenges involved. But what does "special needs" specifically refer to?

Special needs typically means the unique requirements of a person who has (or is at risk of having) learning difficulties or a mental, emotional or physical disability.

Typical special needs conditions include learning disabilities and developmental delays, autism, Asperger's syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other emotional difficulties. Also included are physical handicaps such as cerebral palsy, and hearing, vision or speech problems.

Regardless of the condition, it's a daily challenge if there is someone with special needs in your family. But it's important to remember that there are many tools and resources available to help you cope.

In this issue of *Your Source*, you will learn how to:

- Get an early start on diagnosis and planning to address a child's specific needs.
- Understand how to make the best use of the educational system.
- Tap into resources—including other parents who are on a journey similar to yours—to help your child reach his or her potential.

Helping Someone with Special Needs

Learn everything you can about your family member's disability. The Internet contains a treasure trove of information about specific conditions and their requirements.

Talk to other parents of children with disabilities, or join a support group (either in-person or online).

Get organized by keeping a notebook for school records, medical records, professional evaluations, and letters and notes from school staff.

Stick to a simple daily routine and take things one day at a time.

Become familiar with laws that protect your child's educational rights.

Take care of your own health and wellness, even though you may be busy with school and therapy appointments.

Don't try to go it alone in dealing with your family's special needs. This issue of *Your Source* will help you take charge and get the help you need.

Go Online Today! Log on to www.FOH4YOU.com to access *Families with Special Needs* and other helpful resources in the *Spotlight* section. Or, call 800-222-0364 or 888-262-7848 TTY users, for more information and support.