

FAMILY PARTNERS: *Who We Are*

We are a network of family members and groups – parents, brothers and sisters – who came together due to provincial concerns about adults with developmental disabilities and children with special needs. Basic principles include building on existing family networks and combining our talents, resources and information to better support our family members and ourselves. **Family Partners** is a consortium of individuals and groups who retain their unique identities while working together on collective concerns.

Why we came together

With a new government, new approaches, and an agenda of fiscal restraint and cutbacks, it's timely to revitalize provincial family networking. We came together to identify ways to connect families by providing and sharing information through a variety of channels. Our intent is to provide clear and accurate information for families and to provide a base for advocacy as needed. It is especially critical to reach families in their own communities, and to reach those who do not have access to the Internet.

What We Hope to Achieve (Goals)

We hope to:

- Establish an unbiased information exchange and networking system throughout the province;
- Network with each other and the community at large regarding relevant and emerging issues;
- Monitor changes and their impact on families;
- Ensure that safeguards are in place to protect our relatives, and;
- Provide input to government and other governing bodies regarding issues of concern.

Issues

There are many issues effecting adults with developmental disabilities and children with special needs, including Early Intervention, Child Care, Education, Treatment, Family Support, Health Care, Mental Health, Disability Benefits, Housing and Employment. An immediate priority is the proposed changes to the governance and service delivery structure and cutbacks to programs and services. Key objectives on these issues are to promote the need for:

- Timely, accurate information regarding proposed changes;
- Open, honest discussion about how these changes will impact individuals and families;
- Answers to the questions families have been asking, and;
- Meaningful involvement of all families in future policy development.

First Steps

Bridge with existing regional and provincial family networks in order to identify:

- current methods of collecting and disseminating information, including any gaps;
- opportunities to build on existing communication mechanisms;
- priority issues requiring immediate action.

How Can You Participate

We do not wish to create yet another special interest group. Rather, we hope to share information and understanding between existing groups and with individuals and families who have chosen to remain autonomous. We invite your input on how we can best achieve our goal. You can do this by contacting one of our participating family members to share your ideas and concerns or by attending our monthly meetings. Our next meeting will be January 17, 2003 (location & time TBA).