



## Family Connections

MANSEF's "FAMILY CONNECTIONS" is a family organization that promotes working together in a positive way to create positive outcomes for our children. Essentially, Family Connections will assist all of us (families, school personnel, and other interested parties) in making the lives of children and their families better in the area of access, voice and empowerment, when it comes to navigating through the system of care component of education.

Depending upon your availability, there are several ways you can participate:

1. **Get on the mailing list.** Once we have your contact information we will send you news and information relating to a variety of topics focusing on your efforts to get your child the most appropriate educational environment and cover other topics of interest.

2. **Meet other family members.** We want to respond to your need to connect with other family members who are on a similar journey as you...caring for a child with special needs. Whether your journey is a short term jaunt or a long term excursion, we know the benefits of networking with others who can appreciate your joys and challenges because they are experiencing similar ones.

3. **Respond to policy changes.** Of any component within the system of care for children, Education is the one that is often the most challenging. On the one hand, we know our child has a legal right to an appropriate education; on the other hand there are a variety of opinions and legal issues which often confuse the best of us in terms of defining what is appropriate. We know we want our children to succeed in school and in life. Therefore, we want to be prepared to respond in the most effective manner to any policy and/or legislative changes which may arise, that may negatively impact our ability to access the most appropriate education for our child.

4. **Training.** Through the efforts of many fantastic advocates for children, family members now have the clout to effect change, require appropriate services and expect positive outcomes for their child with special needs throughout the Maryland system of care, of which Education is a crucial component. We know, however the personal demands of caring for a child with special needs AND tending to other aspects of daily life often preclude us from knowing exactly where and how we fit into the process.

For more information, contact Dorie Flynn, 410-938-4413. We want to hear from you!