



# Mental health for youth with disabilities

Young people with physical, mental, learning and/or other disabilities can face obstacles at home, school and socially. “Of the 62 million children under the age of 15, almost 10 percent of them have a disability. Among children aged 6 to 14, more than 1 in 10 children have a disability.”<sup>6</sup>

## Important tips for parents:

- **Take care of yourself.** Self-care is necessary to be able to care for someone else.
- **Be the expert.** Do your own research and work with professionals to best understand your child’s abilities, disabilities and special needs. Value the advice of experts and trust your knowledge and instincts.
- **Focus on strengths.** Give your child steady encouragement and support.
- **Bolster your child’s sense of self.** Let your child know all people living with a disability aren’t defined by their limitations.
- **Build your support network.** Learn about and access programs, services and resources available to you and your child.
- **Advocate for your child in your community and at school.** Teach others how to create inclusiveness for all peoples and abilities.

Youth with disabilities must learn to manage in a world that may not consider their limitations. Below are resources that may help you and your child find support when you need it most.



## Programs and resources:

### Guideposts for Success

This describes what all youth, including those with disabilities, need to transition successfully.

### Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

This provides detailed information and resources on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

### Department of Labor Disability Resources

This has an array of information and resources for youth in transition navigating the road to employment.

### Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers

These centers work with families of young people with disabilities. They help parents participate effectively in their children’s education and development and partner with professionals and policy makers to improve outcomes for all youth with disabilities.

### Understand your abilities and disabilities. Play to your strengths.

(PDF, 28 pages) This resource shares responses from young people with disabilities to discussion questions around labels, assumptions, strengths, impairments, and other topics

## Websites:

- American academy of child and adolescent psychiatry: [aacap.org](http://aacap.org)
- National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (MCHPAD): [nchpad.org](http://nchpad.org)
- Contact NCHPAD toll-free at **1-800-900-8086** (voice and TTY), or by sending an email to [email@nchpad.org](mailto:email@nchpad.org).
- Services for children with disabilities: [childcare.gov](http://childcare.gov)
- Social Security benefits for children with disabilities: [ssa.gov](http://ssa.gov)
- Special needs alliance: [specialneedsalliance.org](http://specialneedsalliance.org)
- Youth.gov: [youth.gov](http://youth.gov)

<sup>6</sup>Disabilities. Accessed February 2021