



Providing support and information for families of children with disabilities, chronic illness and other special health care needs

## Adopt-a-Legislator

A collaboration of Texas Parent Advocates Consortium (TxPacs)  
& Texas Parent to Parent (TxP2P)

In our fall 2007 newsletter, Colleen Horton asked the question: "What will it take to make us **Fighting Mad?**" She highlighted the long interest lists for the Medicaid Waiver programs (8 to 10 years) and the people (over 80,000) waiting for these services. She suggested that parents "begin to have the courage to stand up, make noise, and challenge the system" AND to contact *your* state senator and representative and let them know that people with disabilities are waiting far too long on the Medicaid waiver interest lists to get the services and supports they need.

So, Texas Parent Advocates Consortium (TxPacs) and TxP2P decided it was time to help parents stand up and be heard. You've heard of "Adopt a Family" for the holidays, right? Well, this is "Adopt a Legislator!" It's a legislative advocacy campaign patterned after another statewide parent to parent program's successful campaign several years ago. We need parents and self-advocates from all parts of Texas (this includes **your kids**) who are willing to help, to "adopt" their local senator and state representative. Ideally, each legislator in the Texas House and Senate will be adopted by several parents and self-advocates and they will hear from parents before the session starts and as we progress through it.

Many of us feel overwhelmed by the legislative system or even feel that our voices don't count. Our goal in creating "Adopt a Legislator" is to make it very easy for every parent and self-advocate participating in the process and contributing to making positive change for people with disabilities in Texas. Interested? Here's how it works:

1. **Join the TxPacs Listserv** (to join, email: [txpacs-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:txpacs-subscribe@yahoogroups.com) and explain who you are & why you wish to join. Texas Parent Advocates Consortium (TxPacs) is a "virtual" group of parents and self-advocates committed to advocacy for children with disabilities. The group communicate via email, has an annual rally during the legislative session, and has about 100 members across Texas, parents of children ages birth through 30, cross disability). If you don't have email, call TxP2P (866-896-6001 or 512-458-8600) and we'll put you on a mailing list for the program - it will be exactly the same, just with mailed reminders, etc.
2. Each month, starting in June, we will ask you to contact your legislator via email, letter, phone call, and/or visit. At least once, between June and January, we want you to visit your legislator in person at their local office with your child. We can help you find out who and where your legislators are.
3. We'll send you ideas for the contacts, such as sending an invitation to your child's birthday party, graduation or a family outing, sending copies of report cards, photos of your child doing typical kid activities, and a couple reminders to do it. If you'd rather make an appointment to talk about a specific issue, we can help with that too.

## Texas Parent to Parent

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That's all there is to it! By doing these simple things, we will let the legislators know that we want the best possible future for our children and that they shouldn't have to wait until they are teenagers or young adults to get services in Texas! By adopting our legislators, we will help them to see our kids for who they are - just kids or young self-advocates and future voting members of society who will one day cast a ballot in Texas elections. As parents, we will make it "personal" for our legislators by keeping our kids in front of them until they know who our kids are and why we must fight so hard for their futures. Texas is 50<sup>th</sup> in the country for the amount spent on health and human services - that's shameful and it's time that we as parents and self-advocates speak up! Through our collaboration with TxPacs and other groups, we have the ability to mobilize an army of Texas parents and self-advocates for the 2009 legislation session. By uniting in our efforts to make life better for our children and letting our legislators know what our children need, we will change the way Texas does business. Stand and be counted - make sure that your voice and that of your children is heard all the way to the Texas state Capitol!

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