



Helping Your Child Reach Their Full Potential

- **Focus on Health** Your child may have significant health challenges. This can be difficult and may interfere with their ability to participate in school, sports, or other community activities. This is why it is important to focus on their health. Keeping regularly scheduled doctor appointments, including regular checkups, providing good nutrition and opportunities to exercise or move about as much as they are able, taking medication as prescribed, etc., will help your child be the best they can be. Learn as much as you can about their health condition and things you can do to help keep them healthy physically and emotionally.
- **Try New Things!** Encourage new hobbies and interests and be supportive and helpful as they find things they are passionate about. Exposing your child to new experiences allows them not only to grow, but to build relationships within their community, especially if they can interact with other children who share their passions. Even nonverbal, cognitively impaired children with mobility issues can attend camps and enjoy experiences to help them gain confidence, encourage curiosity with the world around them, and improve mental health.
- **Travel** Opening their world through traveling can have a positive impact on learning when your child is able to put things they learn in school into context. Research has shown that kids who travel have improved academic performance, enjoy school more, and have a greater connection to the world.
- **Teach the Importance of Trying.** Rather than focusing on the end result, encourage children to do their best work and praise them for their diligence and working hard to develop a "growth mindset". Compliment them on the time spent learning and trying new things. Reassure your child that failure isn't bad, it's an opportunity to grow and learn.
- **Encourage Independence.** Teaching your child to be independent can be challenging but is important as they grow, especially if they will one day be responsible for their own health care. Start by involving them in doctor's appointments by sharing how they are feeling, and progressively move them up to making appointments and seeing the doctor on their own as they grow older. You can also teach independence in other small ways to build their independence. Much like teaching the importance of making an effort, encouraging independence will help your child learn from failures and grow, while also helping them take responsibility for themselves and their care plan.
- **Find Balance.** Kids need time to be kids. Be sure to find balance between school, work, therapies, chores and activities. Overscheduling young children can be overwhelming and taking time for reflection, relaxation, and unstructured play is important for grown-ups and kids.

Michigan Family to Family Health Information Center

(MIF2F) exists to share resources, information, and learning opportunities for families of children and youth with special health care needs across Michigan, and also for the community partners and healthcare providers who care for them.
www.F2FMichigan.org

MI F2F offers:

- Information and resources related to caring for a child or young adult with special healthcare needs.
- Parent peers and individuals with experience navigating the maze of special health care services and programs.
- A network of Family Leaders across Michigan to help us identify community supports and resources for families.



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