

Children's Wisconsin supports families in the Northeast with resources for youth with special health care needs

Wisconsin has five Children's Resource Centers for families and professionals of children and youth with special health care needs. Children's Resource Center-Northeast (CRC-NE) is based out of the Children's Wisconsin Fox Valley Hospital in Neenah and serves 17 counties in the area. The majority of those served live in Outagamie, Brown, Winnebago, Sheboygan, Manitowoc and Waupaca counties.

CRC-NE offers child- and family-focused information and referral connections to community resources for children and youth with special health care needs. CRC-NE support is free and confidential. CRC-NE staff have firsthand experience as parents of children with special health care needs and/or years of professional experience in related fields. Staff receive ongoing training focused on helping children, young adults and their families find answers to questions about state and local resources, peer support, health benefits navigation, education resources, and more. The CRC-NE provides education for parents and caregivers on a variety of topics, including developing a medical home to strengthen communication and coordination with a child's health care providers and planning for moving from the pediatric to the adult health care system.

Children with special health care needs often receive specialty health care, and while their care needs may not change as they turn 18, a move from pediatric to adult health care does occur. The CRC-NE can help parents and caregivers find care and services in the community and help them understand benefits the youth may be eligible for to support their health and well-being.

Families may be seeking diagnosis-specific information, connections to disability organizations or resources on how to support their child's education. When a child or young adult has special health care needs, talking with other parents and caregivers helps families navigate the multitude of systems and partners involved in their care. CRC-NE staff help connect parents with other parents and caregivers who may have similar experiences to help offer support, insight and guidance through the Parent to Parent of Wisconsin program, supported by Children's Wisconsin.

Children's Wisconsin's trained staff are available to help answer questions from parents and caregivers, and assist them with navigating an often-overwhelming amount of information about a new diagnosis, available supports and resources, and coping skills. Last year, the most common topics families were seeking support on included: mental and behavioral health resources, Children's Long-Term Services, and health care coverage access and benefits. CRC-NE is part of a larger network of supportive resources, including Children's Resource Center partners, Family Voices of Wisconsin, Connecting Families, Well Badger: Wisconsin Resource Center and ABC for Health.

Last year, CRC-NE staff were working with a family to identify in-home supports for their child with autism, including occupational, speech and Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapies. Children's Wisconsin staff were able to connect the family to a list of providers in their health insurance network of in-home treatment for children and youth with autism and the family sought services.

CRC-NE serves as a valuable community resource guiding families and professionals in supporting children and youth with special health care needs.