



Springfield Regional Office
DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

MISSOURI
FAMILY TO FAMILY
RESOURCE CENTER
UMKC INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT | UCEDD

One of your local "Sharing Our Strengths" Affiliates

- ♦ Are you the parent* of a child with developmental disabilities or special health care needs?
- ♦ Did you wish when your child was first diagnosed that you could talk to another parent with a similar situation?
- ♦ Are you willing to share your experience and become a parent mentor for another parent?

*SOS is also seeking individuals with disabilities, extended family members and professionals who would like to become mentors.

What Is an SOS Mentor?

An SOS mentor is a parent or family member who wants to help other parents and families in similar situations to those they have faced. Mentors volunteer their time to share their experiences, practical information, and offer emotional support to parents whose child has just been born with or diagnosed with a developmental disability or special healthcare need, or who are dealing with issues or stressful situations such as hospitalizations, surgeries or life transitions.

Who Can Be a Mentor?

If you are the parent or primary caregiver of an individual with developmental disabilities or special healthcare needs; if you are a good listener; if you are willing to share your experiences with others; and if you have time to make a few phone calls or send a few emails, then you can become a volunteer SOS mentor. We do require that our mentors complete our orientation program either by attending a group Mentor Orientation Session or individually with the Coordinator.

Mentors can also be extended family members, individuals with disabilities, or professionals.

What Are the Qualifications?

The only special skills required to be a mentor are a willingness to listen and share, and the time to make a few phone calls or send a few emails.



What Does a Mentor Do?

SOS mentors provide emotional support and information to parents and families of children with disabilities and special healthcare needs. Mentors connect with other parents, either by telephone or email, and offer a kind of understanding that no one else can provide. Mentors provide an opportunity for openness in a nonjudgmental relationship. Mentors share ideas and stories of their own experiences. Mentors DO NOT provide any form of medical advice or professional counseling, and do not make decisions on behalf of the person they are supporting.

What Is the Time Commitment?

Mentors must commit to either attending the group mentor orientation session or to an individual orientation process. The orientation usually takes 3 hours or less. Once a mentor accepts a match, they are asked to make at least 4 contacts in an eight week period. The first contact might take as long as an hour, but subsequent contacts are usually shorter.

When we contact an SOS mentor about providing support for another parent, we first ask them if they are able to provide support at this time. A mentor can simply answer "No" and we will not ask any further questions. We can temporarily remove a mentor from our active list until they let us know they are again ready to support other parents. Likewise, we will permanently remove a mentor from our active files as soon as the parent requests us to do so.

How Can I Become a Mentor?

If you would like to become an SOS mentor, please contact Judy Wanko, Family Support Coordinator/Autism Navigator at the Springfield Regional Office. Trainings are offered monthly at convenient locations and times.

E-mail: judy.wanko@dmh.mo.gov

Direct line: 417-895-7446

Toll free line: 888-549-6635

My Mom mentored many parents over the years, informally. Thanks to SOS, we now have an organized effort in Missouri to build a statewide database of caring mentors reaching out to anyone who needs support.

