

SOUTH DAKOTA PARENT CONNECTION

Circuit



2024

Meet the South Dakota Parent Connection Staff

Dr. Carla Miller, Executive Director

Lisa Sanderson, Grants Coordinator

Jennifer Wentzel, Navigator Coordinator

Kris Sellers, Outreach Specialist

Betsy Drew, Outreach Specialist

Tina Kenser, Outreach Specialist

Courtney Temple, Outreach Specialist

Alyssa Hoppe, Receptionist

Ken Randall, Operations Manager

To learn more about our staff visit our [website](#).



Welcome

The Circuit is a newsletter provided by South Dakota Parent Connection highlighting valuable information for parents and professionals about how we help provide individualized assistance, information, referrals, and resources all designed to help support them as they advocate for the children in their lives.

As we prepare for the coming school year, we looked back to see how we have helped South Dakota families and realized the very significant impact. Highlights from this year include:

- Provided resources and individual support to over 1,000 families.
- Conducted 22 parent trainings reaching over 300 families.
- Participated in 11 community events across the state reaching over 900 families.
- Provided over 70 youth and their families with high quality information about transition services and support.
- Provided 9 trainings to our Native Communities to over 150 families and professionals.
- Delivered 11 professional trainings to over 300 attendees.

As school begins, we want to wish you and your children a great year filled with many achievements and great memories. If you have any questions, please [contact](#) South Dakota Parent Connection. Our experienced staff are ready to help!

"We just wanted to send a thank you for all the information and support you provided. We sat down with the school this morning and had a very productive meeting with them. The school wanted us to wait and see how the 504 went before moving forward. But with what we knew and felt, we decided to move forward in the new year with doing the evaluation on him. Without your input and help I don't think the meeting would have gone so smooth. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts." - Parent

FROM DR. CARLA MILLER

Executive Director



I am excited to share that 2025 marks the 40th year South Dakota Parent Connection has been serving families in South Dakota! We are so excited for the year ahead and have many plans we are looking forward to in the coming year!

Did you know that South Dakota Parent Connection was originally called Parent to Parent, Inc. and was funded by a grant from the South Dakota Interagency Coordination Council? The organization re-incorporated under the name South Dakota Parent Connection, Inc. and in 1988 applied for and received the first federal grant funding Parent Training Centers in each state.

Since then, we have been the Parent Training and Information Center for South Dakota, reapplying for the federal grant every 5 years and successfully retaining the award.

This coming year we will be celebrating our anniversary milestone with special events. Keep visiting our website and online newsletter, *weConnect* for ongoing information about what's to come. Hope you can join us as we celebrate.

In the last *Circuit* newsletter I introduced you to a new program we have been running called *Transition To Success*. Partnering with local school districts, parents and youth learn important information on how to plan for the future, including resources available in the community to support their launch. Teachers learn ways of engaging parents and students in dialogue on planning for the future.

To date, South Dakota Parent Connection has provided over 70 youth and their families with high quality information about transition services and support to aid in their successful transition into adulthood.

We also partnered with special education teachers from 15 high schools through a class titled "*Helping Youth and Families Navigate the Transition Process*." Participating teachers strengthened their skills in working with youth and their families, connected with peers, and learned about valuable resources they can pass on to the students they work with.

"This class was so beneficial in itself. The topics and speakers were all interesting and informative. We also learned from each other." - 2024 Parent Participant

"Very helpful to understand the parent perspective. I would highly recommend this class and would take it again. There was so much information for both a professional and parent." - 2024 Parent Participant

To learn more about Transition To Success visit our [website](#) or call us at (800) 640-4553.

Times, They Are Changing

Demand for resources and information by virtual means is growing. In response to this need, we have dedicated a great deal of time updating these resources for our families. Here are some of the statistics that have driven our work:

- Our [weConnect](#) publication that is written and distributed twice each month was shared with over 3,000 individuals. This newsletter shares information and resources for emerging concerns that we are hearing.
- Our [Facebook](#) page reached 69,300 individuals. Our Facebook page helps us keep families and professionals up to date on what we are doing, how we can help, and what other resources are out there for them to utilize.
- 14,878 website users conducted more than 22,456 sessions on our [website](#) resulting in more than 82,000 pageviews. The information on the website is updated daily so current information can be found in one spot. We provide information on events sponsored by South Dakota Parent Connection and other agencies with a similar mission of helping families and children with disabilities.

Website Refresh

In July we launched our newly updated website designed specifically to assist parents who have children with disabilities and the professionals who support them.

The refreshed look includes the same useful information and resources that you are familiar with and some enhancements to make it even more user-friendly. It is easier to navigate with an improved search functionality guiding you to information and resources that are updated regularly to help your family.

To make sure our information and resources are more accessible to everyone, our site includes accessibility tools that assist individuals with visual impairments. Additionally, our content can be translated into 10 different languages, ensuring you can read it in your native language for ease of understanding and use.

In today's information-rich environment, we understand that many individuals prefer a self-guided experience when seeking information and resources. Our extensive range of tools and materials is designed to empower you to find the answers you need at your own pace.

However, we also recognize the value of personalized assistance. That's why our team of experienced staff is always ready to help. If you have any questions or need further support, please contact us. We are here to ensure you have the best possible experience and access to the information you need.



Visit our [website](#) today!

New For You . . .

Navigating the special education system can be challenging and overwhelming for many parents. South Dakota Parent Connection, Disability Rights South Dakota, and the Center for Disabilities have worked diligently to update this valuable resource. This comprehensive guide to federal and state laws and regulations regarding special education is designed to be easily understood and is specifically written for parents and guardians. Its purpose is to help you understand the roles and responsibilities of both you and your child's school district, enabling you to become stronger advocates for your child's needs at school.

The updated edition of "*What Parents Should Know...About Special Education in South Dakota*" is intended to demystify the special education process and empower parents with the knowledge and tools needed to ensure their children receive the best possible education. It addresses common concerns, answers frequently asked questions, and provides actionable strategies for parents.

Key Features:

Updated Information: The book reflects the latest changes in policies, procedures, and resources related to special education in South Dakota. Staying informed about these updates is crucial for effective advocacy and ensuring your child's rights are protected.

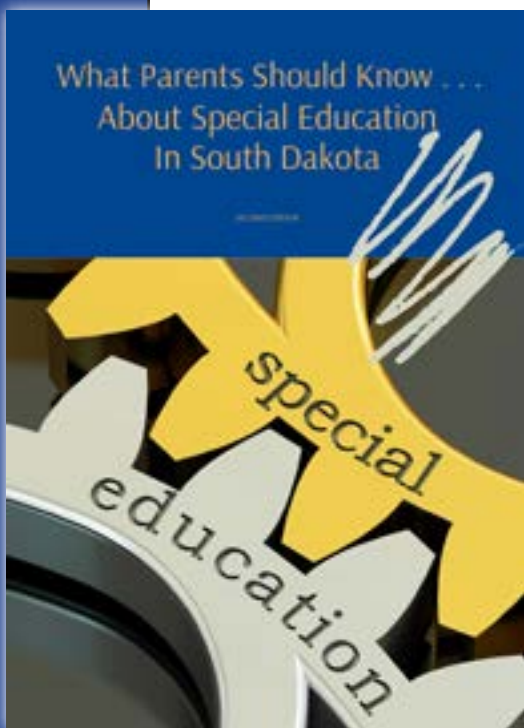
Practical Guidance: It provides detailed federal and state information to help parents understand their rights and responsibilities. By knowing the legal framework, you can better advocate for your child and navigate the complexities of the special education system.

User-Friendly Language: Each chapter includes a section that helps parents interpret legal language and understand how to use it. This ensures that all information is accessible and actionable, regardless of your prior knowledge of special education laws.

Currently, the book is only available online. You can easily download your copy from our [website](#) until it is available in print copy early this fall just in time for the start of the new school year.

By updating this book, we hope to make the special education system more accessible and less daunting for parents and guardians. With this resource, you can confidently advocate for your child and ensure they receive the education they deserve.

A special thank you to John Hamilton from Disability Rights South Dakota for his legal input and editing skills, Emily Meier from the Center for Disabilities, Dr. Carla Miller, and Kris Sellers from South Dakota Parent Connection for their understanding of special education and the IDEA process, and Jennifer Wentzel from South Dakota Parent Connection for the many hours of editing and designing.



More Resource Highlights



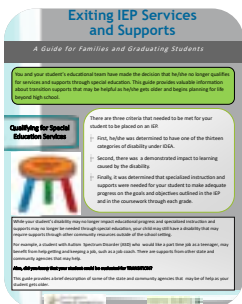
[Understanding School Testing and Test Scores...School Evaluation Data Analytics for Parents](#)

Understanding data helps everyone see what students know, what they should know, and what can be done to meet their academic needs. This resource provides information to help parents better understand the data collected in the evaluation so they can become stronger advocates for their child's needs.



[Preparing for the Future...Understanding Guardianship and Alternatives](#)

Parents and guardians may have questions on how to best support their children as they enter adulthood. This resource assists families, professionals, and young adults to help everyone better understand when guardianship may be needed and when lesser restrictive alternatives will provide sufficient supports.



[Exiting IEP Services and Supports...A Guide for Families and Graduating Students](#)

When a child's IEP Team has made the decision that a child no longer qualifies for services and supports through special education. This resource provides valuable information about transition supports that may be helpful as the child gets older and begins planning for life beyond high school.

Social Emotional Development and Behaviors

- [Social Emotional Development, What You Should Know](#)
- [When Behavior is a Concern . . .A Guide for Parents of School Age Children](#)
- [What Parents Should Know About Understanding and Preventing Bullying](#)

Early Childhood

- [What Parents Should Know About Their Role in Early Childhood Development](#)
- [What Parents Should Know About Sensory Processing](#)
- [Understanding Red Flags of Concern For Your Child's Behavior](#)

Other Resources




- [What Parents Should Know...About Back to School](#)
- [What Parents Should Know...About ADA, 504, and IDEA. Which Laws do What](#)
- [What Parents Should Know...About Health Care Coordination](#)

Explore all the materials we have created to help answer questions related to your child's diagnosis located in the [Learning Library](#) on our website.



How You CAN HELP

What makes South Dakota Parent Connection unique?

-  connecting families of children with disabilities or special health needs to information and resources in an environment of support, hope and respect is at the heart of our work
-  knowledgeable staff with personal experience supporting children with exceptional needs who support self-advocacy and are prepared to provide timely accurate information when you call
-  state-wide resources and learning opportunities provided on our website available when you need them from anywhere

You Can Make a Difference With Your Gift!

We need your help to continue to serve the growing number of families that need assistance.

Here are just a few examples of how you can help:

- Continue to provide materials on topics like behavior concerns and understanding rights and responsibilities at no cost.
- Offer in person and virtual learning opportunities for parents and professionals.
- Provide timely information to parents and professionals in person, on our website or social media.

Does your employer have a Matching Gift Program? Ask them to include South Dakota Parent Connection among the programs they support.

To donate scan the QR code or visit our [website](#).



**Thank
you!**

Our Board of Directors

South Dakota Parent Connection is privileged to work with very dedicated and knowledgeable board members. We are very grateful for the work they do with us on behalf of families and individuals with disabilities and long-term health care challenges.

The Board has prioritized their focus to have the biggest impact on:

- meeting the needs across the state,
- creating program sustainability through ongoing monitoring of policies and practices,
- investing in financial sustainability, and
- investing in ongoing board development.

We wish to express our appreciation for the current Board Members:

***Andrew Renke**, President
Sioux Falls

***Kristi Wallin**, Past President
Sioux Falls

***Amber Winkler**, Secretary/Development Chair
Sioux Falls

***Elizabeth Krogstad**, Finance Chair
Sioux Falls

***Musheera Mohammed Anis**, Member
Sioux Falls

***Lorna (Emmy) Her Many Horses**, Member
Pine Ridge

Lora Barthleman, Member
Sioux Falls

*****Myriah Ventura**, Member
Sioux Falls

***Chris Nickles**, Member
Sioux Falls

* indicates family member of an individual with a disability

** indicates a self-advocate

To learn more about South Dakota Parent Connection and our Board,
find their photos and bios on our [website](#).

Are you passionate about supporting families in South Dakota? Join an organization dedicated to making a difference! Contact Dr. Carla Miller, Executive Director, at cmiller@sdparent.org for more information.