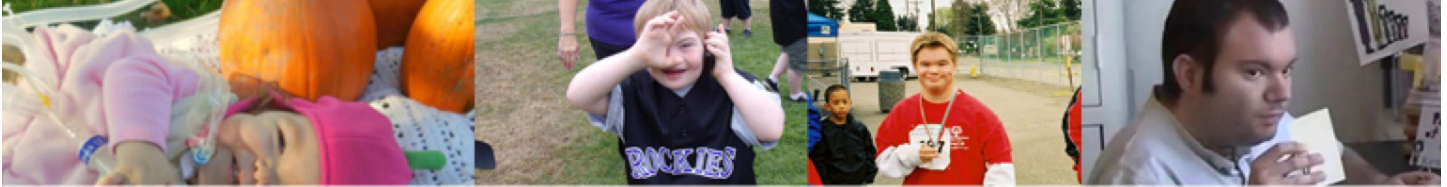




Informing Families

Today and Tomorrow

Informing Families is a project of the Washington State DD Council. For more information, visit: informingfamilies.org



GET CONNECTED



IN THE SUMMER

If you haven't had the time or opportunity to locate summer activities for your son or daughter, below are a list of options and avenues to explore.

Some require more planning than others, but not all. Don't rule out events that are for the whole community. Sometimes, showing up helps open doors for others with similar accessibility and accommodation needs.

Summer Camp

Center for Children with Special Needs has a statewide directory of camps, including tips for parents on what to expect and how to prepare. Visit: childrenshospital.org and click on Classes and Community.

Trips, Inc.

All inclusive vacation packages for individuals age 16 and older.

Visit: tripsinc.com

Outdoors for All (located in Seattle)

Adaptive and therapeutic recreation for children and adults with disabilities.

Visit: outdoorsforall.org

Local Parks and Recreation

City and county recreation programs provide inclusive opportunities for children and adults of all abilities, as well as specialized programs. In addition to classes, community events such as *music in the park* are free and don't require advance sign up. Check your local paper or community notices for times and locations.

“Summer can be an isolating time because we no longer have school to anchor us to the community. It can feel like we're all of a sudden left on our own and are solely responsible for the care of our (not so easy) children. It's so important for both parents and kids to stay connected over the summer. Check local community calendars for meetups and other social opportunities. They're out there!”

*Rachel Nemhauser
Parent to Parent, The Arc of King Co.*

Service Organizations

Non-profit community groups, such as Elks Club, Lions Club, Kiwanis, Easter Seals, as well as many church and faith organizations have programs and activities to benefit children and adults with disabilities.

Exploration for All: Autism Early Open

Explore Pacific Science Center during a special free morning visit before it opens to the public. No heavy crowds, softened general lighting and decreased noise level.

Parent Groups

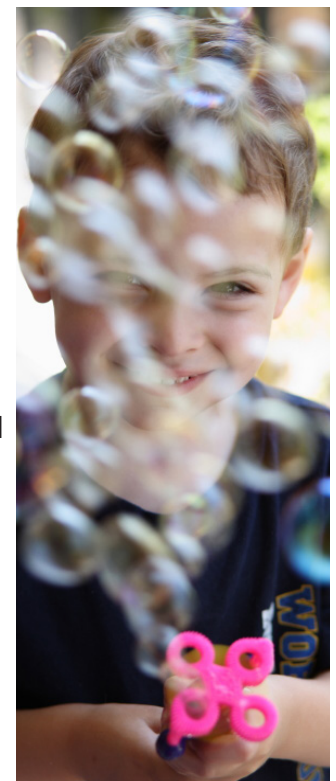
One of the best ways to find out what's available in your area is to connect with other parents and families:

Autism Society: autismsocietyofwa.org

Local Arcs: arcwa.org/getsupport

Fathers Network: fathersnetwork.org

Parent to Parent: arcwa.org/getsupport



Ready, Set, *KNOW*: SSP



A Cash Benefit Alternative to Services



Do the initials SSP mean anything to you? If you are interested in a program that provides a small cash subsidy each month, then this might be the program for you.

The State Supplementary Payment (SSP) program can be accessed instead of Individual and Family Support (IFS) if you qualify for IFS. For many, it's a great way to pay for services and supports without being limited to approved services and contracted providers. To be eligible for SSP in lieu of IFS, an individual must be:

- ▶ a client of DDA;
- ▶ determined eligible to receive SSI by the Social Security Administration; and,
- ▶ eligible for Individual & Family Services.



How Is SSP the Same As IFS?

In addition to having the same functional eligibility requirements (including living in the family home), SSP has the same funding levels as IFS. The amount of funding is based on assessed need.

How Is SSP Different Than IFS?

The monthly benefit is delivered in the form of a monthly payment, either by paper check or direct deposit. No receipts or reporting to DDA are required. The money is for the benefit of the individual's needs beyond what SSI pays for. In this way, it's more flexible and easier to use than the IFS waiver program, which is limited to contract services only and does not cover reimbursements.

Does SSP Affect Other Benefits I Receive?

It should not impact the client's SSI amount, but it could impact food benefits because the Community Services Office takes that resource into consideration. Clients and their families should always include this unearned income whenever they are asked about the resources available to them.

Can I Ask for SSP if I'm Already on the IFS Waitlist?

Yes. If your son/daughter lives at home with you, and you're assessed to be eligible for IFS (and income-eligible* for SSI), contact your local DDA office and ask to be assessed for SSP. Visit dshs.wa.gov/dda for the location

and phone number of your nearest DDA office. [*The family's income is considered for children, but not for adults.]

Can I Move from IFS to SSP?

Yes, as long as you are income eligible and there is capacity on the program (i.e. funding is available). DDA currently has capacity on SSP, but funding is always subject to change. Once SSP enrollment is filled, funding will only be available as other clients leave the program.

Can I Move from SSP to IFS?

Yes, if there are enrollment openings in IFS (i.e., funding is available). Right now, as thousands of enrollments are about to open up in IFS, being able to switch from SSP to IFS is possible. Once enrollment is filled, there is no guarantee that this will always be the case.

Clients wanting to switch from SSP to IFS, or from IFS to SSP, can request to do so at their annual assessment.

Can I Stay on the State-Only IFS Program?

Everyone who is currently on the state-only program will be transitioned to the federal IFS waiver at their annual assessment. A very small number of individuals (those who are ineligible for the IFS waiver program) will remain on the state-only program. If you are income-eligible for SSI, then the SSP program will give you the flexibility (and more) of the state-only program that is being phased out.

The Many Paths to Inclusion

by Betsy McAlister, Guest Contributor

The realization that something is unfair comes in many forms, and often during unexpected moments.

Our moment came last year when my older daughter was a senior in high school. She had tears in her eyes after listening to me explain that her freshman sister was being asked to drop choir due to vague reasons that it might be too difficult.

Her sister, born with developmental disabilities, had been in choir since elementary school, and we thought her participation in the high school choir was a given. And yet discrimination and the difficulties of inclusion were unfolding, once again, in our family life.

As a parent, there have been many times I have faced a teacher, neighbor, friend or stranger who does not understand inclusion; however, my mind kept questioning how my younger daughter could enjoy the benefits of a music program if she wasn't even in the class.

The reality is, physical presence is the first step to inclusion. If my daughter is not even at school events, public places or family gatherings how can she participate?

“We were faced with choices: educate, push, pause, agree or disagree. In this instance, my mandate from my younger daughter was clear: it was time to push.”

Where is her dignity of risk? Shouldn't high school, for her, be about new experiences and classes and not about exclusion and imposed limits?

We were faced with choices: educate, push, pause, agree or disagree. In this instance, my mandate from my younger daughter was clear: it was time to push.

She repeatedly made it clear to me she wanted to stay in her choir class, and she needed help in advocating.

This opportunity was not about a power struggle between her teacher and me but about my daughter's passion for music and her goals in high school.

As my husband and I strategized and attended numerous meetings, we agreed that we had to do what is really hard to do: we listened.



We went to every meeting requested, and we listened...again and again and again.

We listened when the teacher mentioned that my daughter's presence was not fair to other students because it was a performance choir. It was hard to listen to that, but we did.

We engaged our daughter in the process, made our expectations clear and found her additional support for the class.

We refused to agree to her being transferred out of choir, but we also came to the table with ideas, openness and support.

And through the process we found her choir teacher became willing to work with us and offered many great suggestions and ideas.

This past September, at a fall choir performance, my husband and I listened to a few choir members on stage share why they loved choir.

Each mentioned the beautiful music first thing in the morning, the friendships, the learning, and the caring atmosphere of their "choir family."



One student gushed, "Choir is just the best."

My husband smiled at me as we understood those same experiences were just what we hoped our daughter would enjoy.

The path was difficult, but there she stood in a beautiful dress on stage. Singing.

The Arc of Washington State is inviting input on a brief market research survey for the DD Endowment Trust Fund. To participate, visit: mylifeplan.guide/survey

The survey is anonymous and confidential.



Assistive Technology: Help @ Home and Community

Whether it's communication, recreation, employment, education, transportation or just plain daily living, technology levels the playing field for children and adults with disabilities. And, because technology is such a natural part of everyday life for everyone, the options for devices and apps are as numerous and diverse as the individuals who use them. Here are some tips and resources to get started:



{ TIPS }

Identify the Task First. Device Second.

There are a lot of options out there, and no one device is right for every individual. For an extensive database of AT products, categorized by function, visit AbleData's product's page: abledata.com.

Get an AT Assessment

If your child is in school, ask for an AT evaluation as part of the IEP process. For adults, contact one of the appropriate resources to the right.

Try Before You Buy

Make sure the device and/or apps are right for your son or daughter. The Washington Assistive Technology Act Program will lend devices for up to six weeks for a small fee.

Visit: watap.org

{ RESOURCES }

Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)

Several programs include assistive technology in their covered services. Visit: dshs.wa.gov/dda

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Adults with disabilities and high school transition students are eligible for services, including job-related assistive technology.

Visit: dshs.wa.gov/dvr

Washington Assistive Technology Act Program

Information, referrals, training and device loans.

Visit: watap.org

Washington Access Fund

Low interest loans and matched savings accounts for low-income households.

Visit: washingtonaccessfund.org