



You are not Alone





Susan Atkins

WA State Parent to
Parent (P2P)
Coordinator

Mother of three girls
– the eldest, Alexa,
born with Down
Syndrome



Parent to Parent is a project of The Arc of Washington State

www.arcwa.org

We provide family support to
parents whose children have been
diagnosed with a developmental
disability or special health care
need.



WA State Parent to Parent –

- 17 Programs across the state and one at Seattle Children's Hospital
- Assists families through the life span
- Helps families from time of diagnosis through all of life's transitions
- Has been a great way for The Arc of Washington State to increase membership of younger families

Why Families Need Support

- Unexpected feelings
- New parenting challenges







Why Peer Support?



- Parents feel more comfortable sharing with a peer than with a professional
- Parents feel better able to cope with their child and their situation
- Parents are able to view their family and circumstances more positively
- Parents value helping other parents make progress toward their own goals

Singer et al, 1999



The Purpose of Parent to Parent

To match trained Helping Parents (peer mentors) with parents who are experiencing a time of crisis, such as new diagnosis or seeking information.



Coming along side to offer:

- *Support*
- *Experience*
- *Information*



Helping Parents are:

- **Parents or family members of a child with a disability or special healthcare need. They have attended the Helping Parent training.**
- **Offer encouragement, emotional support and information on an informal and personal basis.**
- **Serve as a peer model to help families adjust to their new diagnosis.**



Helping Parents are NOT:

Counselors or therapists

**Advisors, especially medical
advisors.**



Our Goal

- The parent is emotionally supported
- The parent has a support network
- Information



Parent to Parent Support Programs of Washington State

Washington State Parent to Parent (P2P) is a network of 17 community programs and a Program at Seattle Children's. Activities include:

- Free, confidential services
- Leadership trainings for parents who want to become peer mentors/Helping Parent volunteers; currently have over 500 trained volunteers
- Matching parents in one-to-one relationships with skilled, experienced parents in the community based on similar diagnoses and family issues
- Follow-up by local County Coordinators on each P2P referral
- Help with systems navigation

Parent to Parent Support Programs of Washington State (continued)

- Culturally relevant services
- Ethnic Outreach Services – 10 Counties
- Educational trainings
- Newsletters & Facebook; over 19,000 families on mailing list
- Support and social groups for the family
- Recreation Programs
- Special Sitters – Respite
- Sib Shops
- Father's Network
- Support across the lifespan



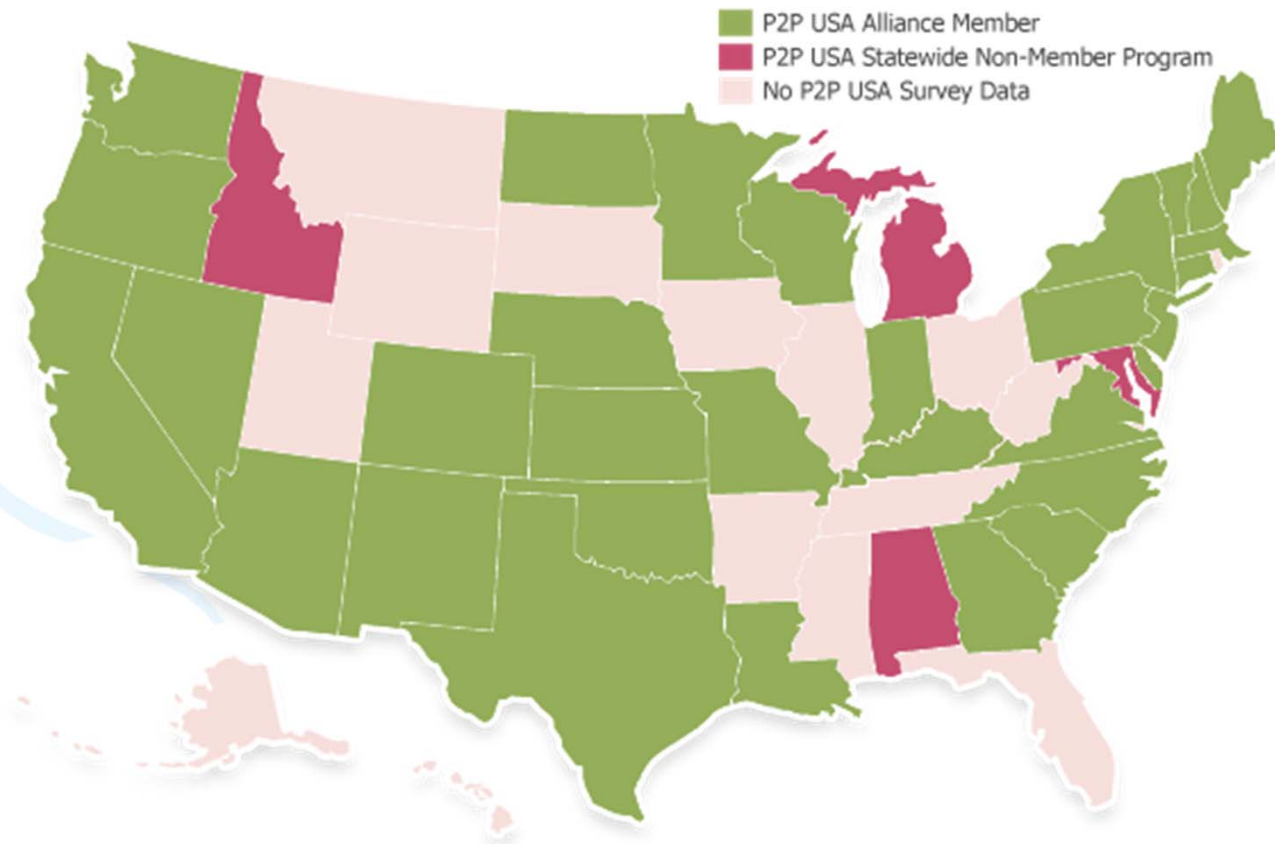
*Sharing the
Journey*

Parent to Parent :



Is a nationwide network

Parent to Parent USA (www.p2pusa.org)





How to Connect

- Parent to Parent USA
<http://www.p2pusa.org>
- Washington State Parent to Parent
www.arcwa.org

Susan Atkins statep2p@earthlink.net


1-800-821-5927 or (425) 641-7504

Thank you for coming!



Alexa Atkins at work



A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide featuring three balloons: a light green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a light purple one at the bottom. Each balloon has a string and several small yellow triangular flags attached to it.

Here's a link to a YouTube video which provides research about how support groups and parent connections can relieve stress for parents of children with a disability, they can even repair our genetic telemers.

Link:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvjzwTBjXMI>

For more information about Washington State P2P, the following links are for the P2P YouTube Channel videos:

Part I: Helping Parents

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ous6Krms4wU>

Part II: Information & Education

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDbbziyghuE>

Part III: Navigating Systems

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLIB38SmqjQ>

