Parent to Parent of PA

Starting/Running Support Groups

When to Refer
Some members may need more than a support group. The facilitator(s) and support group staff should be alert to clues indicating that a member may be having unusual or complicated reactions.

At the Meeting

- The member breaks down at the same point when sharing their story over a period of many meetings.
- A member declines to share their story even after several meetings.
- Anxieties and fears increase over time.
- New phobias are acquired which interfere with typical daily activities.
- The member makes consistent references over several months to loss of sleep or appetite, unclear thinking, and low self-esteem.
- Speaks of suicide in any way, joking or otherwise.
- Persons or places associated with or related to the occurrence of their child’s disability are avoided.
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs, or other self destructive habits.
- Certain topics or discussions cause the member to have panic or anxiety attacks, or exhibit acute grief reactions with increase rather than decrease over time.
- The member gives indications of hallucinations or delusions.
- The member is subject to sudden rages at other members in the group.

Unusual Grief

- A parent may feel a sense of loss or grief for the child they envisioned prior to birth, or for the child prior to acquiring a disability. The following are some indicators of when a referral is necessary
  - There is a great amount of guilt and anger.
  - Continual expressions of intense grief reactions.
  - Inability to function or adapt.
  - Cumulative losses or tragedies in a short period of time, causing a person to shut down.

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