

educational program. Physical and/or occupational therapy, speech therapy, and transportation are examples of such related services that should be provided by the school district. Your child's bus ride should not last an unreasonable length of time. If your child shows an interest in a particular activity, he/she should be encouraged to become involved.

Parent Training and Information (PTI) Offices are located throughout the State. Call our main office toll-free at 1-800-572-7368 (v/tty) for the office closest to you.



RESOURCES AVAILABLE

United Cerebral Palsy Association
1660 L St. NW Ste 700
Washington, D.C. 20036
1-800-872-5827
Website: www.wcp.org

Washington State Contact United Cerebral Palsy of Pierce County
6315 S. 19th St. Tacoma, WA. 98466
253-565-1463

*Children and youth with disabilities have the right to a free appropriate public education.
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Parent Training and Information Program

Tips for Parents of Children with Cerebral Palsy

Statewide Parent Training and Information Center
6316 So. 12th St.
Tacoma, WA 98465
(253) 565-2266 (v/tty)
1-800-5-PARENT (v/tty)
Fax: (253) 566-8052
E-mail: pave@wapave.org
Website: www.wapave.org

Third Decade of Service

What is cerebral palsy?

Cerebral palsy is the name given to a number of conditions in which injury to the brain affects the control of movement. The severity depends upon how much damage has occurred in the brain and which muscles the damaged part of the brain controls. The range of muscle movement for a child with cerebral palsy is less than normal and reflexes are intense.

Although motor development in a child with cerebral palsy may be delayed, learning and language skills can progress at a normal rate. A discrepancy between motor and intellectual areas of development is another clue to the existence of cerebral palsy.

Types of cerebral palsy

Athetoid: This type accounts for roughly 20% of all cases of cerebral palsy. Athetoid is a term describing the unwanted, involuntary movements of cerebral palsy.

Ataxic: In some cases, the principal disturbance is a lack of balance and coordination described as ataxic. Persons with ataxic cerebral palsy may sway when walking and have trouble maintaining balance.

Mixed: When several motor centers are affected, the symptoms are mixed. Symptoms may include hand tremors, problem with fine muscle control, a defect in spatial vision, difficulty in speaking, chewing or swallowing and difficulty in maintaining visual focus.

Some problems associated with cerebral palsy could be seizures; hearing, visual or other sensory handicaps; the inability to identify objects by touch; and mental retardation.

Walking and movement

Any interference with normal muscle tone significantly impairs movement that requires the maintenance of an up-

right posture at the same time the child moves forward in a smooth coordinated manner. In even the most mildly affected child, the constant change in muscle tone that walking requires is difficult. Scissoring is the most common disturbance.

How does the child think?

Many children with cerebral palsy are within the normal range of intelligence and have no particular problem in their cognitive development. In some cases, the brain injury that causes the cerebral palsy has also affected the child's ability to think. These children may have problems organizing the information into action. Learning disabilities are common in children with cerebral palsy. Children who cannot make their muscles work the way they want them to or whose muscles do something unexpected have many problems becoming skillful at using their eyes and hands together to explore the world. Many children cannot tolerate a normal amount of touching because it is uncomfortable for them. This makes it difficult for them to explore things as other children do. There are side effects that can make people treat a child as though he cannot think or learn. Affected muscles in the lips make it difficult to swallow. The drooling is uncontrollable and has nothing to do with a child's ability to think, understand and feel like other children.

How does the child communicate?

Children with cerebral palsy often develop speech late and find it difficult to talk. Some may not be able to control their breathing to create the right air patterns for speaking. Listening may be difficult for some children who have difficulty maintaining attention and concentration while others talk or who have a hearing problem. If a child with cerebral palsy cannot speak or is difficult to understand, other people may avoid speaking to him/her. If a child cannot speak or has difficulty, non-verbal communication may be developed.

Communication problems may affect the child's ability to get along with others. The child will have fewer opportunities to learn all the skills that are part of doing things with people and will have problems in starting an interaction. The fewer experiences a child has in sharing, taking turns and cooperation; the less able a child tends to be in playing and developing friendships with other children.

Can cerebral palsy affect the way a child feels about himself / herself?

A child's self-concept is developed as the child learns to control his/her body and environment. Success gives a child the confidence to try harder tasks. Children with cerebral palsy have difficulty gaining control over body movement. The harder they try, the less control they seem to have. Progress is slow and hard to see. Such problems may make children so frustrated that they give up. The child needs praise for every accomplishment, no matter how small, because the slow rate of progress is so frustrating.

Some school program considerations

The type of program and services that your child needs will depend upon his/her unique needs. If your child's cerebral palsy is accompanied by a second disability such as mental retardation, he/she may need a placement in a special education class. You may find that your child may progress in a regular classroom with special accommodations. Your child may need an aide to assist in note taking in class, additional time to complete tests and assignments or learning to use various assistive technology devices, such as a tape recorder or a computer. Your child may need various related services as part of the