

A quarterly publication from Families Together, Inc., the Parent Training and Information and Health Information Center for the State of Kansas

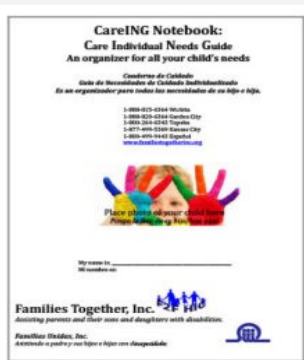
## Thank You to Our Partners

We would like to give special thanks to Midwest Energy and Prairie Pilots for their donation to our F2F program!

With their generous contributions, we will be able to provide more of our CareING notebooks to families and youth with special health care needs.

Our CareING notebooks are provided at no cost to families, and are a tool that helps organize and maintain medical information in one convenient spot.

If you are interested in learning more about our notebooks, or would like to receive one for your child, contact one of our health specialists in a center near you!



## Together We Can Learn Conference Highlights

Families and professionals came together last September for a day full of learning and fun at our annual statewide conference!

Participants heard from our amazing keynote speakers, Dr. Patrick Schwarz and Lee Stickle, about behaviors, living an inclusive life, and the power of building resiliency.

They also attended break-out sessions on Medicaid benefits, collaboration with medical professionals, mental health, and an experienced panel of siblings who shared their strategies and stories.

We're so glad that so many of you attended, and we hope to see you all at our 2020 conference (details will be available soon)!



*Both presenters were amazing, informative and inspiring!*

*Parent Attendee*

*All speakers I heard were very helpful for my kids and being a targeted case manager. I'll be able to use it in both my worlds.*

*Parent /Professional Attendee*



*Patrick Schwarz definitely turned up the enthusiasm and reignited my spark in the game of life with adventures.*

*Parent Attendee*

## Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms

When kids are found eligible for special education services, it's common for their families to worry that they'll be placed in a different classroom than other kids their age. But most kids who are eligible for special education spend the majority of their time in general education classrooms. Many of those classrooms are what's known as inclusive (or inclusion) classrooms.

In an inclusive classroom, general education teachers and special education teachers work together to meet the needs of all students. This is key. As Carl A. Cohn, EdD, executive director of the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, points out, "It's important...to realize that special education students are first and foremost general education students." Many schools have inclusive classrooms, in part because of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA). This law says that students who get special education services should learn in the "least restrictive environment" (LRE). That means they should spend as much time as possible with students who don't receive special education services.

Inclusive classes are set up in a number of ways. Some use a collaborative team teaching (or co-teaching) model. With co-teaching, there's a special education teacher in the room all day. Other inclusive classes have special education teachers "push in" at specific times during the day to teach (instead of pulling kids out of class to a separate room). In either case, both teachers are available to help all students. Studies show that inclusion is beneficial for all students—not just for those who receive special education services. In fact, research shows that inclusive education has positive short-term and long-term effects for all students. Kids with special education needs who are in inclusive classes are absent less often. They develop stronger skills in reading and math. They're also more likely to have jobs and pursue education after high school. The same research shows that their peers benefit, too. They're more comfortable with and more tolerant of differences. They also have increased positive self-esteem and diverse, caring friendships.

*Taken from [www.understood.org](http://www.understood.org)*

## Beneficios de las Aulas Inclusivas

Cuando los niños califican para recibir servicios de educación especial, es común que las familias se preocupen de que los coloquen en un salón de clases diferente al de los otros niños de su edad. Sin embargo, la mayoría de los niños que son elegibles para educación especial pasan la mayor parte del tiempo en salones de educación general. Muchos de esos salones de clases son llamados salones inclusivos.

En un aula inclusiva, el maestro de educación general y el maestro de educación especial colaboran para atender las necesidades de todos los estudiantes. Esto es clave. Como señala Carl A. Cohn, director ejecutivo de California Collaborative for Educational Excellence: "Es importante... darse cuenta de que los estudiantes de educación especial son primero y principalmente estudiantes de educación general". Muchas escuelas tienen aulas inclusivas. Esto es debido en parte, a que la Ley para la Educación de Individuos con Discapacidades (IDEA, por sus siglas en inglés) dice que los estudiantes que reciben servicios de educación especial deben aprender en el "ambiente menos restrictivo" (LRE, por sus siglas en inglés). Esto significa que deben pasar tanto tiempo como sea posible con estudiantes que no reciben servicios de educación especial.

Las clases inclusivas están organizadas de diferentes maneras. Algunas usan un modelo de enseñanza en equipo (o coenseñanza). En ese modelo hay un maestro de educación especial en el aula todo el día. En otras clases inclusivas los maestros de educación especial están presentes en horas específicas del día (en lugar de sacar a los niños de la clase para llevarlos a otro salón). En cualquier caso, ambos maestros están disponibles para ayudar a todos los estudiantes.

Los estudios muestran que la inclusión beneficia a todos los estudiantes, y no solo a aquellos que reciben servicios de educación especial. De hecho, los estudios de investigación reportan que la educación inclusiva tiene beneficios a corto y a largo plazo en todos los estudiantes. Los estudiantes con necesidades especiales que están en aulas inclusivas se ausentan menos. Desarrollan mejores destrezas en lectura y matemáticas. También es más probable que encuentren trabajo y sigan estudiando después de terminar bachillerato. La misma investigación muestra que sus compañeros también se benefician. Se sienten más cómodos y son más tolerantes con las diferencias. Tienen mejor autoestima y sus amigos son más diversos.

*Tomado de [understood.org/es](http://understood.org/es)*

## What is an Education Advocate?

Education Advocates are volunteers who step into the role of a parent for special education processes for children who are in the custody of the state and no longer have parents to advocate for them. The only requirements are that one attends the training offered by Families Together and has a desire to help kids. If you are employed by a school district or a cooperative, you may not serve as an education advocate in that same district or cooperative, but you certainly can serve kids in surrounding areas. Parents, foster and adoptive parents, and volunteers from the community are welcomed!

### Do you need more education advocates?

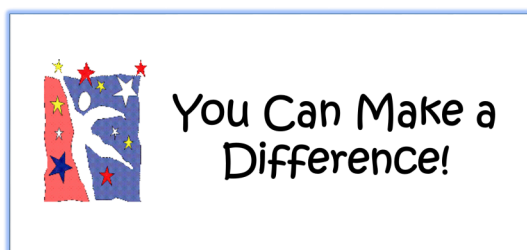
Yes, particularly in areas such as Wichita, Topeka, the Kansas City Metro and Southeast Kansas areas. Children are placed in almost every county in our state, so we need advocates in every county.

### When are the trainings?

Families Together holds eight trainings per year across the state. The training is five and a half hours, delving into the rights and responsibilities of education advocates, types of special education evaluations, the development of an individualized education program (IEP), procedural safeguards, rules of suspension and expulsion and more. The trainings are free and lunch is provided. Check out our calendar of events for specific training dates and locations.

### Who can I contact for more information?

You are welcome to contact our Topeka Center at 785.233.4777 or 800.264.6343 for more information. You may also check out our web page at <https://famielstogetherinc.org/education-advocate/>.



***For more resources, visit [www.famielstogetherinc.org](http://www.famielstogetherinc.org)***

## Q. What triggers a referral for a special education evaluation?

A. There are four ways that a child may be referred for a special education evaluation:

- The parent requests an evaluation;
- The child is referred based on an early childhood screening or from a Part C Infant-Toddler program;
- An adult student requests an evaluation; or
- School personnel suspect that a child may be a child with an exceptionality and need special education services. Typically, school personnel determine this through the general education intervention (GEI) process.

*Taken from the [Kansas Special Education Services Process Handbook](#)*

<https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Special-Education-and-Title-Services/Special-Education/Legal-Special-Education-Law/Kansas-Special-Education-Process-Handbook>

# Workshops

Our workshops, trainings and conferences are offered to parents, education advocates, general educators, special educators, para-professionals, administrators, service providers, and other individuals who care for and about children/youth who have disabilities. For more information and to register, visit [famielstogetherrnc.org/events/](http://famielstogetherrnc.org/events/).

## Transition

### Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT)

A two-day training designed for families, their young adults who have significant support needs, and the professionals who support them.

The goals of FEAT are to increase expectations for competitive employment of the young adult with a disability and increase knowledge of state and federal resources to support the employment of the young adult.

- [Wichita FEAT](#)  
**February 29 & March 6**  
**9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

### Transition to Adulthood TEC

This conference is for youth (ages 14-21) who have disabilities and their families. The conference will include resources and the steps to take before and after leaving school including attending college, employment and living as independently as possible. Real life stories will be shared by self-advocates who are following their dreams.

- [Hays Transition TEC](#)  
**March 14**  
**9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

*"I attended the conference thinking I had a fairly good grasp on services available, but I left with the knowledge of so much more that I did not know. I also think it was wonderful that my son got the opportunity to hear about these services. I especially think it was beneficial for him to hear about advocacy and having a voice for himself."*

*-Parent Attendee*

## Education Advocate

Over 900 children in Department for Children and Families (DCF) or Department of Corrections (DOC) custody are in need of someone to represent them in special education matters. This training is for birth parents, foster and adoptive parents, DCF contracted agency workers, and volunteers.

*DCF, DOC, and KSDE employees are not eligible to serve.*

- [Salina Education Advocate](#)  
**March 19, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**
- [Wichita Education Advocate](#)  
**March 31, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**
- [Chanute Education Advocate](#)  
**April 23, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

## Contact Us

**Garden City Center**  
[gardencity@famielstogetherrnc.org](mailto:gardencity@famielstogetherrnc.org)  
620-276-6364  
1-888-820-6364

**Topeka Center**  
[topeka@famielstogetherrnc.org](mailto:topeka@famielstogetherrnc.org)  
785-233-4777  
1-800-264-6343

**Wichita Center**  
[wichita@famielstogetherrnc.org](mailto:wichita@famielstogetherrnc.org)  
316-945-7747  
1-888-815-6364

[FamiliesTogetherInc.org](http://FamiliesTogetherInc.org)

## What Is A Medical Home?

A medical home is the kind of primary health care we all want and deserve. A medical home is not a place—it is the way care is provided to your child and your family. At the core of a medical home is a knowledgeable, compassionate health care provider and care team chosen by a patient and their family to take care of a child's health needs.

Having a medical home means that your pediatric team:

- Knows the health history of your child;
- Listens to your concerns and needs, as well as those of your child;
- Follows up with any other health care providers your child receives care from, when necessary;
- Works in partnership with you to make sure that the medical and non-medical needs of your child and family are met;
- Creates a trusting, collaborative relationship with you and your child;
- Treats your child with compassion and an understanding of his/her strengths;
- Develops a care plan with you and your child when needed;
- Respects and honors your culture and traditions.

It also means that you and your child:

- Are comfortable sharing concerns and questions with your pediatric team and other health care providers;
- Routinely communicate your child/youth's needs and family priorities to your pediatric team;
- Remember to tell your pediatric team about any care received between visits (eg, emergency room visits, urgent care clinics).

*From the National Center For Medical Home Implementation*

## Staff Spotlight

### How long have you been with Families Together?

I have been on staff for more than 20 years. I was a trainer for three years prior.

### What programs do you work on?

I work primarily as a part of the Parent Training and Information (PTI) Center grant, but I also work on the School Mental Health Initiative. Through this project I am able to help our team better assist parents whose children are struggling with mental health needs and/or trauma. My passion is working with families and transition age youth as they navigate the transition from school to adulthood. I also assist military families. The most important part of my job is helping families!



**Leia Holley**

### Tell us about your family!

My husband, Jamie, and I are proud parents of two fantastic young men. Despite the predictions of medical professionals, Sean has become a trailblazer. Despite the dire predictions made by so many, Sean attended his neighborhood school with his friends and brother, JP. He has never let autism or health needs stop him from being who he wants to be. He works at Oak Creek Nursery and Cider Hill Family Orchard. Our oldest son, JP, overcame a significant learning disability in reading. He loves his job as a consultant. I am also extremely proud of my husband's service in the US Army.

### When you're not serving families, what do you like to do?

I love to spend time with my family. I also enjoy volunteering at Due West Therapeutic Riding Center. I love photography and writing.

### What do you like most about working at Families Together?

More than twenty-five years ago, I called Families Together in tears searching for help. We had just been told by the neurologist that our youngest son, Sean, was severely autistic. The doctor said "he will never be a functioning member of your family." That phone call to Families Together and my journey as a part of the Families Together team, I believe with all my heart is why my family and sons are living enviable lives. My favorite thing about working here is the opportunity to learn from and with so many amazing families. Every day families trust our team to help them through some of their most difficult moments. I have my dream job!



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## Welcome to the Families Together, Inc. Winter Newsletter

Families Together, Inc. provides assistance and guidance to help parents and youth become partners in decision-making. Our non-profit is the Parent Training Information Center as well as the Family-to-Family Health Information Center for Kansas.

### What's Inside?

In this edition of our newsletter, we explore some of our programs and highlights of the past year. We look at medical homes, inclusive classrooms, and how Families Together, Inc. can help you and your students. You'll also find information about our upcoming workshops and trainings.

Nosotros hablamos español 1.800.499.9443

### Want to stay up-to-date?

Consider subscribing to our newsletter electronically! Not only will you receive the quarterly newsletter, you will also receive our biweekly Monday Memo which is full of relevant articles and resources.

You'll also help us save trees and reduce printing costs! Let us know you're interested by emailing [topeka@famiestogetherinc.org](mailto:topeka@famiestogetherinc.org).

