

What is a Family Leader?

Do you want your community to be welcoming for **all children and families**? Do you want to make the health, education and other supports your family has experience with work better for all families? Then consider partnering with us as a family leader.

Becoming a family leader means you are able to advocate for your child's needs **and** also the wider community of children and youth with disabilities and/or special health care needs and their families.

If that sounds like you, here are some ways you can get more involved.

Partnering to Support other Families

This can be providing support to another family member with a similar experience. You can plan gatherings where families can learn from and support each other. Sometimes these gatherings are online using social media.

Partnering within Organizations

Family leaders can help an organization become more effective at supporting families and children. Family leaders can serve in advisory roles, provide outreach and even develop and lead projects. By participating as a leader within an organization, you can help other families understand and access resources as early as possible.

Partnering for Policy and Systems Change

This means family leaders are at the decision-making table—or the podium, in a board room or a legislative office to assure policies are shaped by families' experiences and needs. Families in this role often share powerful personal stories combined with recommendations for policy change. Family leaders may also run for elected office, serve on state or national boards or go on to other professional roles, as a result of their experiences as a family advocate.

Can I Become a Family Leader?

Take advantage of training and skill building opportunities. Throughout the year, Family Voices and our partner organizations provide many free, or low-cost, opportunities for families who want to become effective leaders. Examples include:

- [Partners in Policymaking](#),
- [Parents in Partnership \(PIP\)](#),
- Parent-to-Parent of Wisconsin [Support Parent Trainings](#),
- [Serving on Groups that Make Decisions](#), and
- Family Voices of Wisconsin's annual [Advocacy for Change](#) event that combines skill building and legislative visits.

Links to these training events are available on the Family Voices of Wisconsin's website at familyvoiceswi.org/engage/.

Ready to Serve?

If you are interested and ready to lead, consider applying to serve on a community, school or county board. There are also many statewide boards, councils and committees that develop recommendations for family services and supports. Examples include the Council on Children's Long-Term Support Needs and the state Autism Council. Family Voices has helped compile a list of [State level Committees and Councils](#). Go to familyvoiceswi.org/engage/ and click on **Opportunities to Serve**.

How Can I Keep Connected?

Join Family Voices!

Go to familyvoiceswi.org/connect/ to keep you connected to new opportunities through:

- Family Voices quarterly newsletters,
- Facebook, and
- FAN, our Family Action Network listserv.

If you have questions, or need help finding programs or services, contact the following agencies:

- Regional Centers for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs, a network of five centers dedicated to supporting families who have children with special needs at dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/regionalcenters.htm.
- Well Badger Resource Center at wellbadger.org or call 800-642-7837.

We know that by lifting up the voice of families as partners, leaders and advocates we can work together to improve programs and supports for all families who have children with disabilities and special needs.



Each family has a voice • Together, our voices will be heard

familyvoiceswi.org