PARENT MENTOR

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2025

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SERVING ANTWERP & WAYNE TRACE LOCAL SCHOOLS

PARENT MENTOR NEWSLETTER

"SHOP FOR YOUR FUTURE" **April 14th, 2025 *(FREE!)* event is for Paulding County kids ages 14+ on an IEP or 504 plan, and provided through the collaborative efforts of the Paulding County Multi-Agency Planning (MAP) Team.**

For more information, please contact your home school district at:
Antwerp: snyder_j@antwerpschool.org
Paulding: a_barnes@pauldingschools.org
Wayne Trace: hendricksa@waynetrace.org

YOU MATTER

"COFFEE & DESSERT" PARENT—PROFESSIONAL

"Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Training"

Presented by: Sarah Noggle, QPR Certified Instructor, OSU Extension Office

DATE: Tuesday, May 1, 2025, **TIME**: 4:30-6:30p.m.
LOCATION: Paulding County Fairgrounds, 503 Fairground Drive, Paulding

The mission of the **QPR** training is to save lives and reduce suicidal behaviors by providing innovative, practical, and proven suicide prevention training. We believe that quality education empowers all people, regardless of their background, to make a positive difference in the life of someone they know.

What does **QPR** stand for? **Q**uestion, **P**ersuade, **R**efer—3 simple steps anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide. Just as people trained in CPR and the Heimlich Maneuver help save thousands of lives each year, people trained in **QPR** learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help. Each year thousands of Americans, like you, are saying "Yes" to saving the life of a friend, colleague, sibling, or neighbor. **QPR** can be learned in this Gatekeeper course. ***For more info., or to Register, please visit:*** http://go.osu.edu/PauldingQPR25

(REGISTRATION DEADLINE: APRIL 30, 2025)

This QPR Training is provided in partnership with Cathy Ruiz, Parent Mentor/Family & Children First Coordinator-Service Coordinator, and the Paulding County Extension Office, and made possible thanks to a grant through the Paulding County Extension Office.

Inside this issue:

"SIMPLE & JOYFUL"
The sun shines bright, a gentle breeze,
The world awakes, with budding trees.
Spring has sprung, a vibrant hue,
A fresh new start, for me and you.

SPECIAL EDUCATION—Getting Your Child Evaluated

Initial Evaluation Your school must determine whether your child is qualified for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). An evaluation is the first step in determining if your child is eligible for special education services. This evaluation is usually called an "initial evaluation".

Ask Your School To Evaluate Your Child
Put your request for an evaluation in writing. If you think that your child has a disability and needs special education, you should ask your school to evaluate your child's need for special education services. This request should be in writing and should include your consent for evaluation. Sending a letter will document your request for an evaluation of your child and will establish a time-line for services to begin should your child be found eligible. The letter should be sent in a way that you will have proof of receipt by the district, for example, sending it by certified mail, or via email. Keep a copy of the letter and receipt. (*For sample "request for evaluation" letters, please check out one of the following websites: ocecd.org, disabilityrightsohio.org, education.ohio.gov, dodd.ohio.gov)*

Provide Any Supporting Documents
You should share any assessments, evaluations, or other information you have which supports your child's need for special education services. Examples of information which may support your request for services include: tests, I.Q., psychological evaluations, evaluation of therapy needs (physical, occupational, and speech therapy), communication evaluations, vision and hearing assessments, and medical evaluations.

Your school is required to evaluate whether your child is eligible for special education services. Your school can first provide interventions to address your child's learning difficulties so long as doing so does not delay the completion of a full evaluation for your child. After providing interventions, your school will determine whether your child should receive an initial evaluation. If your school decides not to conduct an initial evaluation for your child, you must be given a notice of the reasons why an initial evaluation will not be provided and notice of your right to appeal the decision.

Data Collection Your school is required to collect information about how the interventions provided are working to assist your child, and whether additional or different interventions are necessary. This information will determine whether your child is likely to be eligible for special education and what teaching methods work well for your child. If your school determines that your child is likely to be eligible for special education, the school must conduct a full and individual evaluation of your child (initial evaluation). The initial evaluation must be conducted in a way that is not discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis and must be provided in your child's native language or other mode of communication (ie: sign language).

Parental Consent Your informed consent to conduct the initial evaluation for your child is required before an evaluation can begin. Informed consent means you understand what your school is going to do regarding the evaluation of your child. Your consent is also required before your school can provide special education services to your child for the first time. Consent for an evaluation (initial evaluation) is not consent for services. You may choose not to consent to an evaluation or services but this may result in your child not receiving needed services.

Time-lines for Services If you send a letter to your school requesting an initial evaluation for your child, including your consent for the initial evaluation in the letter will shorten the time-lines for providing services to your child if your child is eligible for special education. If your child's initial evaluation finds your child eligible for services, an Individual Education Program (IEP) must be developed within 30 days of the date that your child is found eligible, and within 90 days of receiving your consent for an evaluation, or within 100 days of a request for an evaluation.

Develop an Evaluation Plan As a parent, you have the opportunity to participate in any meetings with your school for the purpose of determining if your child is eligible for special education, evaluation, where your child will receive services, and the provision of an appropriate education for your child.

As part of the initial evaluation of your child, the evaluation team is required to develop an evaluation plan that will review existing information available about your child. This can include information you provide, classroom assessments and observations, and information about interventions tried and their success. The evaluation plan must also determine what additional information is needed to determine if your child is eligible for special education.

Review the Results of the Initial Evaluation.
After the evaluation of your child is done, a written Evaluation Team Report (ETR) is done. This report summarizes the evaluation of your child and the recommendations of the evaluators, and determines whether your child is eligible for special education. You will have a meeting to discuss the results of the initial evaluation and ETR. You must receive a copy of this report within 30 days of the completing of the report and prior to the IEP meeting to write your child's IEP.

The evaluation team must determine whether your child meets the eligibility criteria for special education. Eligibility criteria are determined by state law.

Source: disabilityrightsohio.org

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE —House Bill 410

OHIO HOUSE BILL (HB) 410
HB 410:
Was passed in December 2016, and aims to reduce the number of students who end up in the criminal justice system for school-related absences by emphasizing early intervention and collaboration.

The bill focuses on finding solutions to attendance problems, not on punitive measures, as well as preventing truancy and excessive absences by identifying and addressing the reason why students are missing school.

It encourages a student-centered approach to attendance issues, involving the student, parents, and relevant school personnel.

Definition of "Habitual Truant":
A student is considered habitually truant if they are absent without a legitimate excuse for:
> 30 or more consecutive hours
> 42 or more hours in one school month
> 72 or more hours in one school year

Definition of "Excessive Absences":
A student is considered to have excessive absences if they are absent, with or without a legitimate excuse for:
> 38 hours or more in one school month
> 65 or more hours in one school year

Notification to Parents:
Schools must notify parents in writing within seven days of a student reaching the threshold for excessive absences.

Collaboration and Partnership:
HB 410 encourages schools to collaborate with parents, students, and community agencies to address attendance issues.

Collaboration:
Parents will be involved in the absence intervention process and encouraged to work with the school and other agencies to address attendance issues.

For more info.:
www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/131/hb410

ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

ANXIETY is a natural emotion that we learn to experience as early as infancy. The following is a breakdown of signs of anxiety by age, and how parents can help their child through feelings of anxiety that might be helpful:

Years 1-3: Preschool Jitters & Bedtime Fears: During this period, a child commonly begins to spend more time away from their parents, especially if they attend daycare or preschool. This can cause a spike in anxiety, some typical symptoms of which may include: crying, and clinging during goodbyes. A toddler may also feel anxious before and during bedtime, and experience a common fear of the dark or a fear of being apart from their parents.

Things parents can do to deal with these normal fears: have their child practice being away from them for short periods of time, ease into them starting daycare or preschool by asking a grandparent or family member to babysit the child, familiarize the child with the classroom prior to them starting, and also practice a healthy goodbye/reunion, rather than prolonging the goodbye or "sneaking away".

Years 3-4: Wild Imaginations and Tantrums: At this age their imagination goes wild. In addition to realist fears such loud noises, it's common for children this age to fear ghosts, monsters and other figures from their imaginations. Anxiety can also be expressed as a tantrum, crying, freezing behavior, anger, avoidance, or irritability, since they lack the language and emotional regulation skills to explain how they're feeling.

Things parents can do: establish a soothing, predictable bedtime routine-including checking under the bed together for monsters—if needed, pay attention to whether the routine seems to help calm your child's anxiety, if your child has trouble staying in bed—offer gentle encouragement & say "I'll walk you back to your bed now" and implement a check system where you check on the child every 5 minutes, then extend the time between checks as the child gets comfortable being in their own space.

When a tantrum strikes, cooler heads prevail. Try to model a calm approach to the anxiety-provoking situation. If it feels like the tantrums are very frequent and it's getting to the point where it's impairing child or parent functioning, it may be time to seek help.

Years 4-5: More Rational Fears Set In: By this time, your child will have an easier time distinguishing between reality and make-believe, but still some fears of ghosts may coexist with anxiety about more realistic things, such as school, family and health.

Things parents can do: providing comfort and reassurance while helping your child face the situation that is making them anxious, promote healthy conversations with your child—let your child talk about their fears and share some of your own when appropriate, read stories about children who felt anxious with fictional but helpful examples of how they face fear and feel brave doing so.

LIMIT the amount of scary content your child is exposed to, take advantage of parental controls online, and monitor the news you listen to in the car or at home.

How Can You Be a Better Parent to an Anxious Child:
> Adjust your expectations for your child.
> Be confident and encouraging in managing your child's behavior.
> Validate your child's feelings and emotions.
> Promote independence.
> Break down new routines into manageable steps.
> Praise and reward their efforts.
> Planned ignoring works to lessen behavior.

Source: Children's Hospital of Chicago

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS—For Parents

Ways to Support Your Mental Health With the hustle and bustle of daily life, it's easy to put our mental well-being on the back burner. The following are some tips and strategies to help you nurture your mind and body. Remember, small steps can lead to significant changes.

1. *Connect with Nature*. Spend time outdoors, even if it's just for a few minutes. A walk in the park, sitting on a bench, or simply breathing in fresh air can reduce stress and boost your mood.

2. *Get Quality Sleep*. Sleep is vital for our mental and emotional well-being. Try establishing a relaxing bedtime routine, avoiding screens and caffeine before bed, and sticking to a consistent sleep schedule. Adults typically need 7-9 hours of sleep to feel their best.

3. *Stay Active*. Moving your body releases feel-good hormones, reduces stress, and improves sleep. Cold weather doesn't have to be a barrier to staying active. Try indoor activities like yoga, bodyweight exercises, or dancing to your favorite music.

4. *Eat for Mental Health*. Your diet impacts how you feel. Focus on nutrient-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats. Swapping sugary snacks for healthier alternatives can make a big difference over time.

5. *Practice Kindness*. Small acts of kindness, like a smile or a thoughtful gesture, can make a big difference for both you and others. Helping someone else often lifts our own spirits and creates a sense of connection.

6. *Try Something New.* Break out of routine by exploring new experiences. It could be as simple as taking a different route on your walk, trying a new recipe, or learning a new skill. These small changes can keep life interesting and spark joy.

7. *Plan for Joy*. Having something to look forward to, whether it's a favorite activity, a planned outing or a quiet moment with a good book, can help you stay hopeful during tough times.

8. *Set Group/Family Priorities*. One of the biggest causes of family stress is simply TOO MUCH TO DO in a short period of time. Sit down as a family and make decisions about activities that are most important to all of you.

9. *Understand your Feelings*. Take time to acknowledge and name your emotions. Understanding what you're feeling and why can help you navigate challenges more effectively. Journaling or talking with someone you trust can be incredibly helpful.

10. *Talk to Someone You Trust*. Sharing your thoughts and feelings with a trusted friend or family member can be incredibly therapeutic. You don't have to go through challenges alone, and opening up can strengthen your relationships.

HELPLINES AND RESOURCES —If you or someone you know is struggling, here are some resources that can help:
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call or text 988 or 800-567-4673
Crisis Text Line: Text 4HOPE to 741741
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): Call 800-950-6264 or go to ***nami.org***

Source: VWASIG, Ohio Dept. of Children & Youth

* PASSIONATE
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Cathy Ruiz, Parent Mentor

Western Buckeye, ESC
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Entrance #1, Paulding, OH 45879

Phone: 419-399-4800
or 419-203-7364

Email: cruiz@wbesc.org

BRIDGING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME and SCHOOL

THE PARENT MENTOR PROGRAM

WHAT IS A PARENT MENTOR?

The Parent Mentor is a parent of a child with a disability, and provides a support network to parents of children with disabilities and to the school districts who serve them. The Parent Mentor can provide information and resources to families and school districts including education laws, district programs and services, community resources, and special-need related resources, free of charge.

WHAT ARE THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE PARENT MENTOR?

* **Guide families through the special education process, including rights and responsibilities**
* **Listen and provide supports to families and educators on an individual basis**
* **Attend Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and other school meetings at a parent or school's request**
* **Organize and conduct informational sessions or workshops based on the needs of families and school personnel**
* **Builds collaborative partnership between families, schools, and committees to benefit students with disabilities.**

As a Parent Mentor for Paulding County, I am just a phone call away if you need help with your child's special education services, if you need information, or if you have questions. ~ Cathy Ruiz

HEALTHY AFTER-SCHOOL SNACKS!

For quick and healthy after-school snacks, consider options like yogurt with fruit, cheese and crackers, hummus with veggies, or a small portion of trail mix.

Here are some more (quick & easy) ideas for healthy after-school snacks:

Yogurt parfaits: Layer yogurt (plain or flavored) with berries, granola, or a sprinkle of nuts

Cheese & crackers: Whole-grain crackers with cheese sticks or cubes.

Fruit: Apples, bananas, oranges, or berries.

Popcorn: Air-popped popcorn is a healthy and satisfying snack.

Smoothies: Blend fruit, yogurt, and milk or a dairy-free alternative.

Trail mix: Combine nuts, seeds, and dried fruit for a quick energy boost.

Peanut butter and banana sandwiches: Spread peanut butter on whole-wheat bread or a whole-grain tortilla and add sliced bananas.

Fruit kabobs: Thread fruit onto skewers for an easy and fun snack.

Tips for Success:
Involve your kids: Let them help choose and prepare their snacks.
Prep ahead: Make snacks in advance to save time during busy weeknights.
Portion control: Serve snacks in individual portions to prevent overeating.
Make it fun: Get creative with presentation to make snacks more appealing.
Offer a variety: Rotate snacks to keep things interesting and ensure your kids get a variety of nutrients.

WEBSITE RESOURCES

This is by no means an exhaustive list of special – need related websites, but hopefully you will find one or more of these to be beneficial:

STATE & NATIONAL:
dodd.ohio.gov (Ohio Dept. of Developmental Disabilities)
disabilityrightsohio.org (Disability Rights Ohio)
doublearc.org (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder)
education.ohio.gov (Ohio Dept. of Education & Workforce)
epilepsycenter.com (Epilepsy Center of NWO) ncld.org (National Center for Learning Disabilities)
ocecd.org (Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children With Disabilities)
ohiodeafblind.org (Ohio Center for Deafblind Ed.)
ohioschoolforthedeaf.org
ossb.oh.gov (Ohio State School for the Blind)
sstr1.org (State Support Team Region 1)
pacer.org (PACER Center)
parentmentor.osu.edu (Ohio Parent Mentor Project)
transitionta.org (National Tech. Assist. Center on Transition)
understood.org

AUTISM:
asno.org (Autism Society of NWO)
autismcertificationcenter.org
autismlink.com
autismohio.org
autismspeaks.com
cdc.gov/actearly
fhautism.com (Future Horizons Autism)
ocali.org (Ohio Center for Autism & Low Incidence)