

“How Social Workers at The Center Help the Families of Children with ASD and Other Neurodevelopmental Disorders”

By **Maureen Dillon**, *Licensed Clinical Social Worker*



At The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders we meet many families who are looking for help and guidance for their children with special needs such as autism, ADHD, or other neurodevelopmental and behavioral challenges. In the days and weeks

following a diagnosis, families may experience a wide range of emotions, including fear, frustration, loneliness and confusion, just to name a few.

As part of The Center’s multidisciplinary team, social workers can speak with parents and provide support to families after a diagnosis. The Center’s providers make referrals for the social workers to follow up with a family, and families are also encouraged to call the social workers at The Center.

As clinical social workers, we talk with many families that are just starting to learn about autism and all the programs and services in the community that families need to access to get their child the help they need. We facilitate a support group, which meets monthly at The Center, and provides an opportunity for parents to connect with each other and talk about successes and challenges they are facing. It’s a

chance for parents to obtain advice from each other and teach each other.

Some families need help accessing programs and we work individually with families to ensure they get connected. Other families may be experiencing difficulties such as food insecurity, financial hardship or caring for an elderly family member. We talk with families about their stressors and identify community-based programs that can help, like Family Resource Centers. Parents and siblings of children with special needs can also have mental health concerns at times. There are a wide variety of programs that provide mental health services to children and adults in our community, so we can help a family connect with those services too.

As children with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders get older, they may need different supports to help them in their transition from adolescence to adulthood. We talk with youth and parents about programs at their high schools, the Regional Center and the community, which provide training and guidance toward working and living independently.

The Center works alongside social workers to make meaningful recommendations and best meet the needs of families.

Maureen Dillon is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker at The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders



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& NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS**