

## Care Connection for Children



## What Can It Do For You?

by Barbara Harding, R.N.

### Editor's Note:

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Remember the last time that you were lost and couldn't figure out where you were? Depending on who you are, either you looked at the map, called a friend for directions or kept on driving! Wouldn't it be nice to have a place to call where you were heard and if you wanted, they would help you figure out the directions? The six Care Connection for Children Centers in Virginia try to do just that!

Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Health, Care Connection for Children is a "free" program for children and youth who are physically disabled and under the age of 21. These centers help smooth out the road for children with special needs and their families. Each Center has staff that provides family-friendly service by guiding these children and their families through the many challenges presented by health care, community resources, education...or whatever seems to pop up along the way!

The Virginia Department of Health has long been an advocate for the thousands of children with special health care needs in the Commonwealth. Created in 1936, its program for children with special health care needs ultimately evolved into the Children's Specialty Services, clinics that treated children in over 20 pediatric medical/surgical specialties.

A comprehensive assessment of the kinds of things required by children with special health care needs, began in 1998 and guided by the principle that families are the true experts in identifying and describing their children's needs, suggested ways by which the services to children with special health care needs throughout the Commonwealth could be improved. One of the goals that emerged was for the health

department to develop partnerships with health care providers and establish regionally managed Centers of Excellence to facilitate the medical care and support services available throughout the regions. Six of these Centers for Excellence, known as Care Connection for Children, have been established and are partners in the Virginia children's special health needs network.

Care Connection for Children Centers are regionally

based centers that enable care coordination team members to maximize the resources in the region's communities and bring them to bear on the specific needs of all the children with special health care needs in a region. In short, they offer a helping hand to the families of children with special needs. Do you need assistance obtaining health insurance or to better understand the benefits of a policy you currently have? A Care Connection staff member can help. Are you trying to find the

best way to approach your child's education team to discuss changes to a child's education program? A Care Connection team member can help you address this issue.

When recently surveyed about their satisfaction with the program, parents who have been receiving Care Connection services specifically mentioned the helpfulness of the child's case manager. One parent wrote: "Our case manager has been such an important support system for our family."

So if you are one of the many families looking for the "right road" to getting the appropriate care and services for your child with special needs, think about making a call to Care Connection. The road may be bumpy but Care Connection can ride right along with you. ■ Visit [www.vahealth.org/specialchildren/index.html](http://www.vahealth.org/specialchildren/index.html)

### Who Qualifies as a Child with Special Health Care Needs?

*Children with special health care needs are those who have physical disorders that are expected to last for at least 12 months. They also have one of the following:*

- A need for medical or related services beyond those normally expected for the child's age or they need ongoing treatments, interventions or accommodations at home or school;
- A limitation in their functions, activities or social roles compared to those of their healthy peers; A dependence on medications, special diets, medical technologies, assistive devices.

