

Getting You to the Conference: Funding Tips for Families

Finding funding to assist you in getting to a national or local conference is not always easy, but with some imagination and “elbow grease”, partial or complete funding can be found. Here are some tips to get you started:

Prepare!

- ✓ Look closely at the agenda, speakers, and topics. Make sure this is the right conference for you. Decide which workshops you are most interested in ahead of time.
- ✓ Check your timelines. Do you have enough time to raise the funds you need and meet registration deadlines? Always try to take advantage of “early bird” registration fees which can be significantly less.
- ✓ Make a budget. How much do you need? Don’t forget to include costs for travel, parking, shuttle to airport and/or hotel, lodging, meals, child care, etc.
- ✓ Make a list of who can help you. Think of people who know you and your child and let them know your goal. Ask if they can keep you in mind for any scholarships they may know of. Your child’s therapists, counselors, teachers, and health care providers can be helpful.



Who to ask:

- ✓ Identify the organizations, state agencies, councils, and others that work with children with special health care needs. If you don’t know who they are, ask your child’s case worker, special education coordinator, or call the Family to Family Health Information Center.
- ✓ Identify local service organizations such as Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis, Lions, Elks, Knights of Columbus, etc. Read up on their mission, purpose, and giving guidelines. These organizations are often pleased to assist a family to become more knowledgeable about disability issues. Get the names of the president or chairperson and their mailing address.

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What to say:



- ✓ Write up a one-page letter describing why you are interested in attending the conference and ask the group to cover one or more of your expenses or to contribute what they can. (Avoid “to whom it may concern” or form letters. Write individual letters to organizations, using the name of their chairperson or president.)
- ✓ Include a copy of the conference agenda, highlighting the workshops you would attend and the registration information.
- ✓ Include your budget sheet.
- ✓ Be specific in your request. You can say something like: “I am asking your organization to pay for ...” Suggested items are:
 - Air fare to OR from location
 - Airport shuttle and parking
 - Registration fees for one or two days
 - One or two days of child care
 - One or two nights at the hotel
- ✓ Offer something in return, such as distributing their materials at the event if appropriate, bringing back resources to share with their staff or members, and/or making a presentation to their group about what you learned.



Other tips:

- ✓ Emphasize how this training will help you better care for your child’s medical condition
- ✓ Always follow through with a thank you, an explanation of how going to the conference helped you, and offer to speak at a board or staff meeting or family gathering.
- ✓ Consider a “giving circle” of friends and family. Take the total amount you need, divide it into smaller amounts that individuals can more easily afford to contribute.
- ✓ Tell how YOU will contribute to getting to the conference. Are you using frequent flyer miles, vacation hours, savings, etc? Will you be willing to share a room, bring your own meals, etc? If so, include those details to show your commitment.
- ✓ Do you own a business? If so check with your tax advisor to see if any of the expenses are deductible.
- ✓ Remember that businesses and service organizations need plenty of lead time to get approval for requests like these.



GOOD LUCK! See you at the conference!