

## Why Parent to Parent Peer support?

At 30 weeks gestation, our little guy decided enough of this womb stuff and out he came. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> preemie. Our oldest was only a few weeks early and was a typical preschooler. Our 2<sup>nd</sup> child had only lived 45 minutes - all we wanted was for our son to live. So began a parenting journey that continues 30 years later.

He lived, we breathed a sigh of relief. He had multiple challenges - we had questions - doctors didn't have a lot of answers. I needed to talk to another parent, someone who'd been down this road before me. 30 years ago there were no parent to parents but the social worker connected me to another parent.

Though I've forgotten their names, I remember the conversation. Their daughter was Emily, she was 3 and I will never forget the last thing they said. They said that Emily was continuing to develop and learn but when she stopped it would be ok 'cuz she would still be Emily.' Wise words! I saw that there was another family who had been through this and lived to tell the tale. They were thriving - we could too.

Today there are more than 30 Parent to Parents around the country. I am proud to be a founding member and now on staff of Parent to Parent of Colorado. All P2Ps do different things but to be a Parent to Parent Network partner for P2P-USA a program must provide one to one peer matching.

30 years ago, I was a scared new mom of a preemie wanting to connect to another parent, so today parents come to us. With preemies, 3 year olds getting their first diagnosis, school aged children who have learning challenges, middle schoolers who have a diagnosis and the parents have never before met another parent with their child's diagnosis – they find us and we connect them in state or through one of our national partners. They come with high schoolers - what does the adult world look like when the little yellow bus quits coming to their door? They come as older parents of adult sons and daughters who have been doing it on their own for decades and discover us and find out they do not have to do this alone.

The journey is unique to each family and the needs individual to the child, but through Parent to Parent connections:

- You realize you are not alone
- You find other parents who understand and support you
- You discover that together is better!

It is our Vision that parents and their sons and daughters are integral valued members of society with a voice in shaping their chosen communities

We offer emotional and information support for Colorado parents- Both through one to one parent matching with a trained peer support parent, and through an online private parent only support group with over 3000 families across the state. Free.

For more information and to register go to [www.p2p-co.org](http://www.p2p-co.org).