

For students with physical handicaps, self-image is extremely important. Teachers need to ensure that the child's self image is positive. Physically handicapped students are aware of the fact that they are physically different than most others and that there are certain things they cannot do.

Choices with Handicap Children

A generation ago, children with severe handicaps often died of complications, if not of the handicap itself. Handicapped children were consigned to institutions, where most had little chance of developing. Handicaps were hidden away, not discussed. Today, attitudes are changing. Parents are now encouraged to keep all but the most profoundly handicapped children at home. Fewer full-time residential institutions are available and state and local agencies provide more technical and financial support services directly to families. In most states, foster care is available for families who do not feel they can cope with the burden of a disabled child.

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Technological advances in medicine have enabled doctors to surgically correct many problems that afflict children with Down syndrome, spina bifida, clubfoot, cleft lip and palate, and heart malformations so that these children can be more easily cared for at home. Many formerly fatal handicaps, such as hemophilia, can be treated with medications or blood transfusions.

Even with support services, the burdens-physical, emotional, and financial-fall heavily on families with handicapped children. Surgery or medication may not "cure" a handicapped child, although procedures that today are somewhat controversial for children, like cochlear implants, may provide to be "near cures" of the future. Parents must take time to ask questions and become informed. One of the best sources of information will be other parents of similarly handicapped children.

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If no parent-support group exists in your area, consider starting one. Names can often be provided by national organizations, medical specialists, professional in the field, and state and local health departments. Contact with other parents, even parents in different locations, will give you a chance to discuss some problems relating to discipline and to relationships with peers and with family. Contact with other families will give your handicapped child the opportunity to see others like himself and give you a chance to see what other handicapped children can accomplish.

Your local library may have the names and addresses of national organizations that are concerned with specific handicaps. Medical services and assistance are provided by the state and local health and welfare departments [look in the telephone pages under your state agencies]. Departments of children and family services and handicapped children's services may also provide information about funding programs and institutions. Local service organizations, such as the Variety Clubs, Lions, Elks, Shriners, and Jaycees often provide scholarships and support hospitals and other programs that serve handicapped children.

Support Organizations for Parents of

Handicapped Children

- [National Information Center for Handicapped Children and Youth](#), PO Box 1492 Washington, DC 20013; 703-522-3332 [Reference URL: delete before publishing:
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICEstSearch_SearchValue_0=ED255008&ERICEstSearch_SearchType_0=eric_accno&accno=ED255008]
- [Family Resource Center on Disabilities](#), 220 S, State Street, Room 412, Chicago IL 60604; 312-939-3513 [Reference URL: delete before publishing:
<http://users.ameritech.net/frcdptiil/index.html>]
- [March of Dimes National Foundation](#), 1275 Mamaroneck Avenue, White Plains NY 10605; 914-428-7100 [Reference URL: delete before publishing
<http://www.marchofdimes.com/>]

- [National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health](http://www.ncemch.org/), 38th and R Streets, NW, Washington DC 20057; 202-625-8400 [Reference URL: delete before publishing <http://www.ncemch.org/>]
- [Self-Help Center](http://selfhelp.prairienet.org/), A Program of Family Service of Champaign County, 405 South State Street, Champaign, IL 61820; 217-352-0099, self-help[at]prairienet.org [Reference URL: delete before publishing <http://selfhelp.prairienet.org/directory.php#Disabilities>]