

Wisconsin Association for Retarded Children

(GUIDELINE FOR PARENT-HELPERS)

1. Listen to the new parents first, find out what their fears and questions are. Talk over the problems of retardation, relating your experiences with your own child.

Point out that mental retardation is a handicapping condition resulting from many different causes, which has as its most common characteristic a slowness in learning. Retarded children have all the same physical and emotional needs of normal children, but have the additional need of special help to overcome the difficulty in learning. Often, minor physical handicaps, which add to the learning disability, may respond to treatment, resulting in an increase in functional level. For this reason, there is a real need for obtaining a detailed medical evaluation.

2. We still have much to learn about the mentally retarded. But don't build false hopes about ultimate achievements. Just say, we don't know all the answers, that is why we parents are all working with professionals to try to find as many of the answers as we can.

The degree of retardation--impossible to determine at birth--will to a large extent determine the child's future level of growth and development. The general purpose of carefully planning for the future of a retarded child through the varied services available is not to reach any one goal, but to help the individual attain his full capacities and potential, whatever they may be.

3. Tell about the variety of community services. (See description sheet). Not recommended for first visit.

4. Offer to discuss retardation with other members of the family as well.

Specifically, grandparents are often most upset and concerned by the birth of a retarded child. You may be able to ease the situation by helping them to understand the problem, too.

5. Invite parents to visit your home and meet your child and family...if appropriate.