



# About us

- Train families to become effective self-advocates through education and advocacy.
- Provide information, guidance and unique support to families of children with disabilities as they access services from the wide array of public, private services and resources.
- Focus on the family as a whole, rather than isolating the child with a disability recognizing that families need the same supports no matter the age of their child.
- Support persons with disabilities to self determine their lives in areas of education, employment, housing and recreation in our community.

CONTACT US  
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F.I.R.S.T. is a resource center for families of children with or at risk of disabilities that has been serving families in Western North Carolina since 2002 with over 7,000 contacts with families in the community about special education issues, access to community resources and best practice. Started by a group of parents and professionals with a goal to inform and support families of children with disabilities.

All families qualify for education and training from F.I.R.S.T. but we focus on families with family members with disabilities including developmental delays, physical disabilities, learning disabilities and mental illness. Most of the support to families has been one to one help at the time of crisis or for specific information usually dealing with school issues or accessing community services through state and government agencies.

F.I.R.S.T. services start at birth by supporting and training preschool teachers to include children with disabilities including social/emotional issues in childcare centers through a Smart Start of Buncombe County contract, the SUNSHINE Project. To support children in the school setting, F.I.R.S.T. funded as a Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC), educates and assists parents of children with or at risk and English Language Learners by the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs in western North Carolina counties.

With limited funding for 2008 and 2009 from Western Highlands Network, F.I.R.S.T. ACCESS Project helped families understand how to access public Developmental Disabilities services through individual and group trainings.

With partnerships with Asheville Parks and Recreation and other groups, F.I.R.S.T. is able to offer summer camps for children and youth with a variety of opinions.

By creating collaborations in the community, F.I.R.S.T. looks for projects to fill gaps in the needs of families of persons with disabilities. Services offered in English and Spanish.