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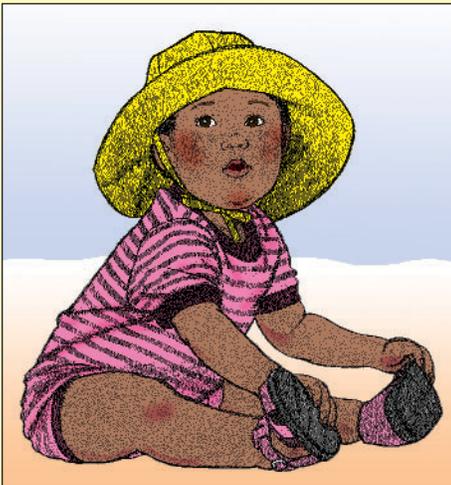
WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

# BIRTH through 5 NEWS

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS • VOLUME 4, NUMBER 4

## Summer Fun Can Foster Growth and Development

By Lynn Malone, Parent Educator,  
Director of Branford School  
Readiness Program and Coordinator  
of Branford Family Resource Center



*This article is translated into Spanish on  
page 2. Ver la versión española de este  
artículo en la página 2.*

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University of  
Connecticut

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM  
College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Think back for a moment, to your own childhood and what summer meant for you. Did the days seem filled with endless sunshine and unlimited adventures? Can you smell the salt air of a favorite beach or the thick, musty smells of paths through the woods? Do you remember the games you played, the songs you sang, or the friends who joined you in hide and seek, jumping rope or dodge ball? Do you see the moths flickering at the porch light, the stars twinkling in the heavens? Can you taste the lemonade, the watermelon, the juicy peach or plum cold from the refrigerator? Do you remember how it felt to shed your jacket, socks and shoes and wiggle your toes in the grass? Ah, Summer: the season when all our senses come alive.

Think now to your own child or children. What memories of summer will they have? What can you do to ensure that their senses will be touched by the wonders of the season? Thankfully, it doesn't take a lot of money, equipment or planning to expose your child to the joys of summer.

Connecticut has a wealth of low cost or no cost parks, beaches, gardens and forests within a short drive for just about anyone. Having a picnic and watching kite flying at Harkness Park in Waterford is fun and relaxing. So is attending a summer concert on a town green or people watching on a shady bench. Exploring a tidal pool, excavating a fiddler crab or following the trail of a hopping toad or butterfly are great for fine muscle control and visual tracking. Visit Elizabeth Park in Hartford for the June-blooming rose display and watch the ducks and geese in the nearby pond. Each town has a pond or garden that draws onlookers for soulful quiet time, good for children and parents alike.

If getting out and about is too much of a chore, see if you can plan occasional outings with a helpful friend. Keep trips short and sweet so that both parent and child are not hot and cranky from too much activity. If trips are not your thing, there is a wealth of wonders outside your back door. In the smallest patch of dirt, you probably have ants that march, bees that buzz, birds that chirp and the makings for great mud pies or pretend pizzas. Provide a toy car, a stick, a hat, cape or old spoon, and your child can imitate the characters in a favorite book, movie or television show. Children's play gives them the power to act out what they see in the world around them. On rainy days, besides a walk in puddles, nothing is more fun than a sheet tent placed over living room furniture or a kitchen table.

Anything that makes the ordinary seem special is fun for a child. Keep a box filled with paper, crayons, paper towel rolls, a glue stick, anything that glitters or shines or those paint with water coloring books and bring it out on an "off" day.

Ask your children's librarian for suggestions for summer reading. Check out parenting magazines for additional ideas about how to have family fun. By having a simple scavenger hunt, your child can sort objects by size, color, shape, texture and even smell.

A child can collect rocks and organize them from smallest to largest or by color from lightest to darkest. Help your child observe and make guesses. What will happen when we drop this rock in the water? Will it sink or float? By asking questions, you help your child to wonder about the natural world. Sing songs, find words that rhyme, listen to outdoor sounds and guess what they are. The world is an amazing place, and you as the parent can make the ordinary extraordinary through your interactions with your child.

You know your child better than anyone, and you know if the suggestions given will work for you or not. If your child puts everything in his mouth, substitute fruit for sorting instead of rocks! If your child is not verbal, he or she still benefits from your questions and will still be surprised when the rock splashes in the water. The bottom line is that you and your child are spending time together learning about the world.

All children learn through play. Play incorporates all the major and minor muscle groups, all the senses, and encourages positive and productive thinking. As a parent or caregiver, the

most important thing you can do this summer is to expose your children to the wonder of outdoors, read them delightful stories to feed their imagination, and provide them with props to act out the world they see around them.

**Suggested readings to help parents reflect on their childhood:**

- *Roxaboxen* by Barbara Cooney
- *Miss Tizzy* by Libba Moore Gray
- *Time of Wonder* and *One Morning in Maine* by Robert McCloskey
- Any book by Dr. Seuss

**For ideas on activities and crafts:**

- *Family Fun Magazine*
- *Child's Play* by Leslie Hamilton

- *The Toddler's Busy Book* by Trish Kuffner
- *Baby Play and Learn* by Penny Warner
- *Games to Play with Babies* by Jackie Silberg
- *Games to Play with Toddlers* by Jackie Silberg
- *Games to Play with Two-Year-Olds* by Jackie Silberg
- *365 Outdoor Activities You Can Do With Your Child* by Steve and Ruth Bennett
- *A Year of Fun* series from babies to five available at most toy stores and teacher stores
- *Creative Play Activities for Children with Disabilities* by Lisa Rappaport Morris and Linda Schutz

## Diversión veraniega que promueve el crecimiento y el desarrollo

Por Lynn Malone, Educadora de padres, directora del programa 'Bradford Readiness' y coordinadora del centro 'Bradford Family Resources'

Haga memoria, por un momento, de los veranos de su infancia... ¿No eran días llenos de sol y de aventuras sin fin? ¿No siente todavía el olor del aire salado de cierta playa o la humedad espesa de los senderos del bosque? ¿No recuerda los juegos que jugaba, las canciones que cantaba o los amigos con quienes jugaba al escondite, a bailar la suiza o a esquivar el balón? ¿No le parece ver maripositas nocturnas alrededor de la luz del portal, y un cielo increíblemente estrellado? ¿No le parece saborear la limonada, el melón de agua, la fruta jugosa, fría del refrigerador? ¿No revive la sensación de despojarse de medias y zapatos y frotar en la hierba los dedos de los pies descalzos? ¡Ah, el Verano... la estación en que todos los sentidos recuperan la plenitud!

Piense ahora en sus propios hijos. ¿Qué memorias tendrán del verano? ¿Qué

puede usted hacer para que sus sentidos sean tocados por las maravillas de la estación? Afortunadamente, no se necesita ni mucho dinero, ni equipo ni planificación, para exponer a los niños a los inolvidables disfrutes del verano.

Connecticut tiene profusión, a bajo o ningún costo, de parques, playas, jardines y bosques a corta distancia de casi todos nosotros. Hacer un picnic mientras se contemplan las cometas que se empujan en el Harkness Park de Waterford es entretenido y relajante. También lo es asistir a un concierto de verano en un parque del pueblo o sencillamente observar la gente en un banco a la sombra. O explorar un charco de los que deja en la arena el reflujo del mar o seguir el rastro de una rana saltarina o de una mariposa. O visitar en junio el Elizabeth Park de Hartford para la exposición de rosas y contemplar los patos y gansos en la laguna adyacente. Cada pueblo tiene un estanque, laguna o jardín que invita a pasar ratos de conmovedora tranquilidad, buenos tanto para los niños como para los padres.

Si se le dificulta salir o pasear, vea si puede hacerlo ocasionalmente con alguien de su amistad. Que los paseos



sean cortos y placenteros, que ni el padre ni el niño se acaloren y se vuelvan malhumorados por un exceso de actividad. Si no le ilusiona pasear, hay maravillas con solo trasponer el portón de su casa. En la más pequeña extensión de tierra hay probablemente hormigas que marchan, abejas que zumban, pájaros que gorjean y los ingredientes para un pastel de lodo o una pizza de mentiritas. Búsquele un carro de juguete, un palito, un sombrero, una capa o una cuchara vieja y su hijo podrá imitar personajes de un libro, película o programa de televisión de su predilección. Los juegos infantiles son su forma de reproducir el mundo que les rodea. En días de lluvia, aparte de saltar charquitos, nada más divertido que una tienda de sábanas sobre los muebles de la sala o la mesa de la cocina. Cualquier cosa que haga que lo ordinario parezca

especial es divertido para un niño. Mantenga una caja con papeles, creyones, rollos de papel toalla, goma de pegar, cosas relucientes o brillantes y libros de colorear con agua, y sáquelos en los días de lluvia.

Pídale a la bibliotecaria de los hijos que le sugiera lecturas de verano. Busque en revistas sobre crianza ideas adicionales de cómo tener diversión de familia. En una simple excursión de recolección, su niño puede clasificar objetos de acuerdo con su forma, color, tamaño, textura y hasta olor.

Un niño puede recolectar piedras y colocarlas por orden de tamaño o de intensidad del color. Ayúdelo a observar y aventurar conjeturas. ¿Qué ocurrirá cuando dejamos caer esta piedra en el agua? ¿Se hundirá o flotará? Haciéndole preguntas, usted ayuda a su hijo a pensar en el mundo de la naturaleza. Cante canciones, encuentre palabras que rimen, escuche los sonidos de la naturaleza y adivine lo que son. El mundo es un lugar asombroso, y usted como padre puede hacer extraordinario lo ordinario gracias a la interacción con su hijo.

Usted conoce a su hijo mejor que nadie, e intuye si las sugerencias dadas le servirán o no. Si su niño se lleva todo a la boca, sustituya las piedras por frutas en el juego arregar. Aunque su hijo no sea verbal se beneficiará de sus preguntas y le sorprenderá el chapoteo de la piedra. En fin de cuentas lo importante es que usted y su hijo pasen tiempo juntos aprendiendo del mundo.

Todos los niños aprenden jugando. El juego incorpora todos los grupos de músculos mayores y menores, todos los sentidos, y estimula el pensamiento positivo y productivo. Como padre o niñero, lo más importante que puede hacer este verano es exponer a los niños que cuida a las maravillas de la naturaleza, del aire libre; leerles historias deliciosas que exciten su imaginación y proveerles apoyo para que simulen el mundo que ven a su alrededor.

#### **Sugerencias de libros para ayudar a los padres a discurrir sobre su propia niñez:**

- *Roxaboxen* por Barbara Cooney
- *Miss Tizzy* por Libba More Gray
- *Time of Wonder* y *One Morning in Maine* por Robert McCloskey
- Cualquier libro del Dr. Seuss

#### **Para ideas sobre actividades y trabajos manuales:**

- *Family Fun Magazine* (*Revista de diversiones veraniegas*)
- *Child's Play* (*el Juego infantil*) por Leslie Hamilton
- *The Toddler's Busy Book* (*el Libro del que empieza a caminar*) por Trish Kuffner
- *Baby Play and Learn* (*el Bebé juega y aprende*) por Penny Warner
- *Games to Play with Babies* (*Juegos para jugar con bebotes*) por Jackie Silberg
- *Games to Play with Toddlers* (*Para jugar con niños que empiezan a caminar*) por Jackie Silberg
- *Games to Play with Two-Year-Olds* (*Para jugar con niños de dos años*) por Jackie Silberg
- *365 Outdoor Activities You Can Do with your Child* (*365 actividades al aire libre con su niño*) por Steve y Ruth Bennett
- *A Year of Fun* (*un año de diversión*) para niños hasta de cinco años, en venta en jugueterías y tiendas para maestros
- *Creative Play Activities for Children with Disabilities* (*Juegos creativos para niños con incapacidades*) por Lisa Rappaport Morris y Linda Schutz

## **Birth to Three System Update**

*By Linda Goodman*

**W**e have had quite some excitement in Birth to Three these past few months. As you may have heard, the Governor's budget for the next two years proposed that we make Birth to Three a non-entitlement and that we drop out of the Federal program (which is Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). The Governor was concerned that as Birth to Three serves more children each year, the costs to the state go up much more steeply than the amount of federal funding we receive under the IDEA. The fact is that expenditures have risen 52% over the past five years and the number of children and fami-



lies served has risen 56%. The proposal meant that if we did not have to guarantee services to all eligible children, the state could control the rate of growth by limiting intake or limiting services or both. As you can imagine, many families of children who are

receiving or who have received Birth to Three services were quite upset about this proposal. Over 200 of them gathered at the Legislative Office Building in mid-March to attend a press conference called by State Senator Edith Prague and about 40 testified before the Appropriations Committee. Their message was, "Don't eliminate the entitlement. We need to assure equal access for all children and their families who need early intervention services."

I am pleased to report that the legislature heard this message and was willing to look at alternatives that would allow the state to maintain the entitlement, keep the federal funding, and still operate the program within a fixed budget for the next two years. As a result, there will be some changes starting July 1. The biggest change is that all families will be asked to make financial contri-



## State ICC Helps Makes Voices Heard

The State Interagency Coordinating Council and its subcommittees offer everyone a chance to make their voices heard. The Council has focused on four important areas affecting the Birth to Three System, its families, and providers:

- legislative involvement
- family participation
- community learning opportunities
- birth through five

If one of these topics is very important to you, here's what you can do:

- Send your opinion or a request for action to the Council for their consideration.
- Bring your ideas to a Council meeting and make a public comment (time is included on the agenda especially for this purpose at each Council meeting).
- Ask to join that subcommittee.

The legislative subcommittee helped initiate a press conference at the Legislative Office Building on March 12th that gave many families an

important opportunity to tell their stories and make their opinions known to their elected officials. Their very visible presence that day was then carried over to the television news and continues to spark newspaper articles and letters to the editor.

Your voice is important. Help make decisions that can shape the future. See page 4 for meeting dates. Directions are available by calling (860) 418-6146 and are on the Birth to Three website at [www.birth23.org](http://www.birth23.org). Send correspondence to: State ICC Chair Lolli Ross, c/o Birth to Three, 460 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106-1308.

## "SNIPPETS"

### The Parent Perspective

## Planning Ahead for Summertime Fun

By Jane Hampton-Smith

For some people, fun may not be something they think should require planning. Fun should be spontaneous and exciting. If the kids are out of school and you have some time off, you may just want to "play it by ear." If that is what works for you and your family, then go for it. For many of us however, having a good time requires planning, and lots of it. When you have a child with a disability, spontaneity may not work as well as it did before. The good news is that, with some planning, there are plenty of ways to enjoy your time off and time together.



My family has tried many ways of enjoying our vacation time; we have tried day trips, weekends and whole weeks away. We learned something about ourselves on every adventure. The first thing we learned was that hotels did not work well for us, and especially when traveling and staying at different ones every night. Because adjustment took time for my son with autism, new hotel rooms caused anxiety. It was important for us to learn that we were not going to change him. We needed to change the way we thought about vacations. We needed to adapt the environment to suit him, and overall he is now a great vacationer.

We have also learned that his needs have changed over time, and we now vacation in a totally different way than we did when he was very young. At

that time, we found the most enjoyable vacations were at a house or condo rental on the beach, usually with friends to share the expense. We stayed close to the vacation house and were able to maintain our normal routine. We had control over naps, food and all of the things that can make traveling difficult. Our son adjusted well and slept well, while we were able to enjoy the evening in a room apart from where he was sleeping.

As he got older, and a brother came along, things changed. I believe his exposure to spending time away from home was helpful in adjusting to a more active vacation. On his tenth birthday we decided to try a Disney-world vacation. He and his brother were at a point where they wanted something to do every minute of the day. Leisurely beach vacations were a thing of the past. We planned to go in the off-season so we had smaller crowds to contend with. We studied the rides, and we chose ahead of time ones that were appropriate and ones to avoid. We found out where the restaurants were and made pre-reservations so he never had to wait long. We planned our day to include time off for poolside breaks and relaxation. With

much research, planning and expenditure, we were able to make this week in Disney a great success.

We have experienced many types of travel and the most successful trips included lots of forethought. This story is that of a boy with autism. I expect your child's needs may be completely different, but the message is the same: think about your family's wants and needs and plan accordingly. Ask yourself questions about situations you may encounter, and how your child will handle those situations. To ensure a good time, avoid anything that you believe may cause your child difficulty and be prepared to leave if it does. If this is disappointing and leaves you feeling like you will never make it to Hawaii because eleven hours of flight time is out of the question, there is hope. Your children may develop the ability to tolerate the long journey, or there is always the option of asking a reliable friend or family member to stay with the kids while you allow yourself the chance to experience a grown-up only vacation.

## The Provider Perspective

# Parents: Give Yourself a Break with Stimulating Summer Activities

By Jane Cannon, MSW, LCSW

**R**espice needs and opportunities for families of infants to five-year-olds are diverse and limited. One size does not fit all! Children's needs and parent preferences vary, while respite options for parents of young children can seem scarce.

Traditionally, respite care is viewed as providing appropriate substitute care for a person in order to relieve the caregiver from her responsibilities for a time. The Connecticut Lifespan Respite Coalition is working to address this need.

Several parents in the Connecticut Birth to Three System began meeting as a respite advocacy group two years ago. They soon became widely known and other groups and agencies joined this group, now incorporated as The CT Lifespan Respite Coalition (CLRC). The goal of CLRC is to promote the availability of respite for caregivers and promote awareness among legislators and the public of the need for public support for respite care.

Despite the limited options for traditional respite care, there are ways that parents can find relief and refreshment for themselves and, at the same time, provide developmentally stimulating activities for their child. Much depends upon the developmental needs of their child. An opportunity to play and interact with a group of peers may be stimulating and fun for one child, but could be terrifying to a child who is not comfortable with new events and unfamiliar people.

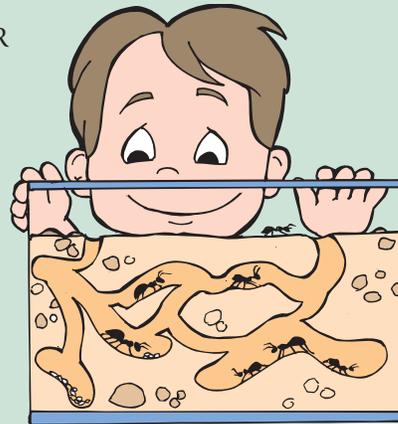
Providers can help families to acknowledge that they need a break from their 24-7 responsibilities, and that relief gives parents the opportunity to refresh themselves physically, mentally and emotionally. It can be helpful to parents who feel worried or guilty to realize that they will likely have renewed energy and be better able to parent when they return.

### Some options to consider include:

Families and providers can explore summer community recreation programs. If your child enjoys new experiences and other children, this is an excellent opportunity to provide him with enriching stimulation while you meet new people.

Many communities have playgrounds with equipment ranging from infant swings to child-size climbing bars and large sand areas for digging, pouring sand and other sensory play.

Many town libraries have made efforts to appeal to young families, providing age appropriate events and activities. Consider visiting the library several times in order to help your child feel comfortable during the group activity.



Some parents have partnered with other parents whose children have similar interests or needs. Meeting with a parent whose child has similar issues can be rejuvenating and reaffirming. While it does not give you time away from your child, it can be a relief to be with a parent who can understand

and sympathize with you. With permission of all parents involved, the service provider can share families' names and contact information so that parents can set up play dates.

At times, it can be helpful to just get out of the house and change the routine. There are always chores to be done, but the laundry and dishes will be there when you return.

Some parents have hired high school or college students to provide childcare. Call a local college's departments (occupational therapy, special education or speech) and ask to post an ad. Interview perspective providers and check references. When you and your child feel comfortable with the helper's style of caring, you might plan to spend a few hours away for a respite break.

Recruitment of more parents in CLRC is a priority. Please consider joining. Your opinions are needed. To find out more about CLRC, please call (203) 776-5689 and leave your name and telephone number, or email [ctlifespanresp@aol.com](mailto:ctlifespanresp@aol.com).

## Summer Safety Tips



### Pool Safety

- Never leave children alone in or near the pool, even for a moment.
- Make sure adults watching young children in the pool know CPR and can rescue a child if necessary.
- Surround pools—on all four sides—with a sturdy five-foot fence.
- Make sure pool gates self-close and self-latch at a height children cannot reach.
- Keep rescue equipment (a shepherd's hook—a long pole with a hook on the end and life preserver) and a telephone near the pool.
- Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as “floaties.” They are not a substitute for approved life vests and can give children a false sense of security.
- Children are not developmentally ready for swim lessons until after their fourth birthday. Swim programs for children under four should not be seen as a way to decrease the risk of drowning.
- Whenever infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's length, providing “touch supervision.”

### Travel Safety

- Buckle up carseats and seat belts.
- Keep children entertained with car games and story tapes.
- Make periodic stops along the way.
- Keep supplies with you, such as snacks, water, a first aid kit and any medicines your child takes.
- Always use a carseat, starting with

- your baby's first ride home from the hospital. Help your child form a life-long habit of buckling up.
- Read the manufacturer's instructions; always keep them with the carseat.
- Read your vehicle owner's manual for more information on how to install the carseat.
- Put your child in the back seat. It is the safest place in the car because it is farthest away from a head-on crash (the most common type of crash).
- The harness system holds your child in the carseat and the seat belts hold the seat in the car. Attach both snugly to protect your child.
- Children in rear-facing carseats should never be placed in a front seat equipped with an air bag.
- Children traveling alone to visit relatives or attend summer camp should have a copy of their medical information with them at all times.

### Playground Safety

- Carefully maintain all equipment.
- Swings should be made of soft materials such as rubber, plastic or canvas.
- Make sure children cannot reach any moving parts that might pinch or trap any body part.
- Make sure metal slides are cool to prevent children's legs from getting burned.

### Fun in the Sun

- Babies under six months should be kept out of the direct sunlight. Move your baby to the shade or under a tree, umbrella or the stroller canopy.
- Dress babies in lightweight clothing that covers the arms and legs and use brimmed hats.
- Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside, and use sunscreen even on cloudy days. Do not use sunscreen on young infants. Check with your pediatrician for specific recommendations.
- The sun protection factor (SPF) should be at least #15.
- Try to keep children out of the sun between 10 AM and 4 PM—that is when the sun's rays are strongest.

### Bug Safety

- Do not use scented soaps, perfumes

- or hair sprays on your child.
- Avoid areas where insects nest or congregate, such as stagnant pools of water, uncovered foods and gardens where flowers are in bloom.
- Avoid dressing children in clothing with bright colors or flowery prints.
- To remove a visible stinger from skin, gently scrape it off horizontally with a credit card or your fingernail. You can also remove a stinger by pinching it out with a pair of tweezers or your fingers.

*Continued on next page.*

## BIRTH through 5 NEWS

### Information for Families and Professionals

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## Dog Bites

- If you are getting a pet as a companion for your child, wait until your child is mature enough to handle and care for the animal—usually around age five or six.
- Never leave your infant or young child alone with any dog.
- Teach your child some basic safety precautions for dealing with dogs outside your home, such as not surprising or scaring a dog or never approaching an unfamiliar dog.
- Instruct your child to stand still if approached or chased by a strange dog. Tell your child not to run, kick or make threatening gestures. Your child should face the dog and back away slowly until he or she is out of reach.
- Contact your pediatrician whenever your child receives an animal bite that breaks the skin, no matter how minor the injury appears. The doctor will need to check whether your child has been adequately immunized against tetanus.

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# Training Opportunities

## FOR FAMILIES AND PROVIDERS—SUMMER 2003

### • Orientation to the Birth to Three System

June 23 9:00 AM – 12:00 Noon  
New Haven No fee

For more information or registration, call **Kathy Granata** at the Birth to Three System at (860) 418-6146.

### • From Goals to Data and Back Again: A Summer Seminar and Computer Lab on Working with Young Children with Disabilities

June 26 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM and  
June 27 9:00 AM – 12:00 Noon  
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM or  
4:00 PM – 7:00 PM  
Middletown \$60

### • Social and Communication Interventions for Young Children with Autism: A Summer Institute

July 29 and 30 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM  
Middletown \$100

### • Feeding and Pre-Speech Issues in Children with Mild to Moderate Disabilities

August 14 and 15 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM  
Cromwell \$60

For more information or to request a registration form for any of the above, see the SERC website: [www.ctserc.org](http://www.ctserc.org) or call **Jennifer Sharp** at SERC at



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