New York State has 791,909 Children & Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN; NYS DOH, 2020).

- There are often limited resources for community inclusion available.
- Many parents of CYSHCN struggle to achieve this social inclusion for the family.
- Full inclusion and participation in the community is a fundamental equal right for everyone (United Nations, 2022).

**Objectives**

Explore parent experiences to identify factors promoting community inclusion.

**Methods**

- Semi-structured focus groups conducted with 86 parents (2020-2021).
- Transcripts of interviews were coded into categories.
- Thematic analysis was conducted.

**Results**

Boost parent confidence to access their community

"I think if they were exposed to like a mini service public announcement or a mini commercial, saying, ‘Your child -- my child is not like yours.’ One of those like touchy, feel-y kind of thing that, gives you a tear in your eye at the end. And if more people are exposed to this type of things, [...] we spend so much money on marketing, maybe people would have a better understanding and feel what we feel."

Disability awareness / sensitivity training for community

"I took my son [...] to get his haircut [...] and I remember a parent [who] didn’t have a child with special needs, called me an awful mom [...] because I let my son scream in the chair [...] And she cursed at me after [...] it was horrible and saying I am an awful mom, just because I let my son scream."

**Recommendations**

- Expand community trainings and encourage local town representatives to increase knowledge of strategies, foster attitudes of acceptance, and create accessible environments.
- Teach individuals with disabilities how to access settings in the community and target life skills.
- Increase parent awareness of their rights and laws related to accessibility, educational training and access to family advocates.