

Island County Parent to Parent Newsletter

Are you anxious about meeting new people? Me too. Join us and engage as little or as much as you want. Check us out. No pressure.

End of Summer Fun with Parent to Parent
Sunday, September 7th
Noon – 2:00pm Fort Nugent Park

End of Summer BBQ

Sensory Friendly “Touch a Police Car & Armored Truck”



We Provide the Food & Entertainment

Bring the Whole Family! All Ages, All Abilities

Enjoy the BBQ, Activities, Arts & Crafts & More.

We are partnering with OHPD to offer the first “Sensory Friendly Touch a Police Car & Armored Truck” Balloon Artist Jenny & Julie

**September
2025**



Helpful Resources

Parent to Parent:

[https://
www.islandcountywa.gov/
198/Parent-to-Parent](https://www.islandcountywa.gov/198/Parent-to-Parent)

Informing Families:

[https://
informingfamilies.org/](https://informingfamilies.org/)

DDA is now DDCS:

www.dshs.wa.gov/dda

**Learning Disability
Association of WA**

[www.ldawa.org/
resources/](http://www.ldawa.org/resources/)

Disability Rights of WA

www.disabilityrightswa.org



Want to know more about Parent to Parent? Check out our website and Facebook page.
(360)632-7539 Call/Text

School Refusal and Truancy

Think about this for a minute. What is the worst job you ever had? The job you hated more than anything? It was so bad that at night you had trouble sleeping because you were already stressed about going in the morning.

Or, you hated getting up in the morning to go. After work, you were fried. You had nothing left to give to friends and family. What did you do? I bet you quit. Right? That's what school refusal is. Kids are quitting the job that they hate.

For full article: <https://adayinourshoes.com/school-refusal/>

1. What is School Refusal? School refusal is a term used to describe a child's consistent reluctance or refusal to attend school, often resulting in prolonged absences.

2. School Refusal vs Truancy School refusal is not the same as truancy, as truant students generally skip school without their parents' knowledge, while children with school refusal typically express their concerns and distress openly.

Children With Anxiety May...



Appear more clingy than normal



Be restless and fidgety



Complain of stomachaches



Display changes in eating and sleeping habits



Express negative thoughts or worries



Get upset or angry more quickly



Have bouts of unexplained crying



Struggle to concentrate

verywell

4 POWERFUL ways to **MANAGE** BACK-TO-SCHOOL ANXIETY

Big Life Journal

1 PREPARE

- Establish and maintain a **connection to school** by attending fun events together.
- Initiate early discussions** about the upcoming school year with books like "Noni is Nervous" by Heather Hartt-Sussman and "Mae's First Day of School" by Kate Berube.
- Let them know it is normal to worry.** Simply knowing to expect some jitters early on, and even hearing about yours, can be very reassuring.
- Help them build resilient mindsets.** Tune in to a few episodes of the Big Life Kids podcast together to learn more about facing challenges.



2 IDENTIFY SPECIFIC FEARS



- When delving into specific fears, be sure to **phrase questions positively** ("Do you know who you might play with at recess?" versus "Are you worried no one will play with you?").
- Consider some of the most **commonly-reported school fears**. Your child may worry about academics, social interaction, having the "right stuff" for school, or separating from you.

3 FOCUS ON POSITIVES

- Encourage your child to write about their school fears.
- Start by grabbing a piece of construction paper, and label one side "**Worry Thoughts**" and the other "**Happy Thoughts**." Draw a line down the center of the page. Then, have them either write or draw in each column.
- Have your child name all the **fun things that happen at school** that can't happen anywhere else.
- Remind your child that all the thinking they've done means they're **ready for the year**.



4 STAY CONNECTED

Consider adding one of the following acts to your **morning routine** to maintain the connection with your child all day and soothe worries:

- Draw reminders on **hands** (a heart or kiss)
- Give them a **worry stone** or bead to keep in pocket and rub when feeling nervous
- Apply fragrances** like your perfume or lotion to hands/arms that can be sniffed during the day. The more the scent wears off, the closer they are to seeing you again!
- Put your **photo in their backpack**
- Place **encouraging notes** or messages in lunch box.



BIG LIFE JOURNAL - BIGLIFEJOURNAL.COM

How to Deal with School Refusal

1. **Go with your gut.** Parents usually know when a problem is a problem or just a blip on the radar. Is this just a minor parenting and discipline issue that requires you to be a bit more strict and stringent for a while? Or is it truly time for an intervention? Have social and/or academic demands changed recently?
2. **Act quickly and ask for help.** And be proactive, collaborative and cooperative. If you see a pattern developing, act now. Things can spiral out of control quickly. This is one issue that causes family/school relationships to deteriorate quickly. Don't wait until you're looking at truancy letters in the mail or failing grades. If your child has refused to go to school and you let them stay home even once, you've opened a door that is very hard to close, so do not wait.
3. **Document everything.** Why don't they want to go to school? What is their reason for refusing school? Document everything they are telling you and include his/her teacher and IEP team. You need to get your paper trail and documentation going.

Find the source or cause of the school refusal. All behavior tells you something. What is this behavior trying to tell you? **Bullying**? Learning disability? Anxiety? What is your child saying? Can you find a pattern or an incident that may have triggered this?

Familiarize yourself with school refusal laws.

There's really no such thing as school refusal laws. However, **truancy laws exist**. We may not think they are fair or reasonable, but that's not for us to decide. You need to familiarize yourself with your state truancy laws and be

proactive (point 2 above). This is why you need your paper trail. If you find yourself in truancy court, you want to have data and documentation that you have been trying to solve this problem.

Get evaluations and an FBA. If the child has a **Behavior Plan**, either it is insufficient/inappropriate for that child, or it's not being followed. So it has to be fixed. If the child does not have an IEP or Behavior Plan, you need to ask for IEP evaluations to get one.

1. **Seek treatment.** The IEP process is long. From a letter requesting evaluations to a Behavior Plan in place could easily take 100 days. While you are waiting, see what your insurance plan covers. Or if your state offers Wraparound Behavioral Health options.
2. **Make home "unfun."** Your child is experiencing school avoidance because school is unbearable and home is safe. Home can be safe and supportive without being all that much fun. While you work through this, if your child is going to be home, it shouldn't be a party and all kinds of trips to fun places. I'm not suggesting you make the child feel unsupported or unsafe, but it's not spring break either.

Pursue other options. One of the hardest thought hurdles for us as a society is the vision we have for our public school system. What we are learning is that we are not one-size-fits-all. Maybe **homeschooling** is the best option for your child. Or a different IEP placement.

For full article: <https://adayinourshoes.com/school-refusal/>

Behavior and School: How to Participate in the FBA/BIP Process

This 2-part virtual training has information about how to support a child's behavior at school. When behavior gets in the way of learning, schools are responsible to figure out what the child is trying to communicate and to teach the child what to do instead.

The process of figuring out why a child is acting out is called a Functional Behavioral Assessment—FBA for short. The first video in this 2-part series is about the FBA process.

A Behavior Intervention Plan—BIP for short—is a working document that the school and family build together and review regularly to make sure the child is supported with positive reinforcement and encouragement for meeting behavioral expectations. The second video in this 2-part series is about BIP development. For full details and videos:

<https://wapave.org/behavior-and-school-how-to-participate-in-the-fba-bip-process/>



Can Students be Excluded from Field Trips for Behavior? It depends.

Can students be excluded from field trips for behavior?

Special Education Field Trip Laws

No, a school cannot exclude your child from a public school sponsored activity based upon their disability. It can't be because "we don't have a nurse to go on the trip" or "we're afraid your son may elope" or any other reason related to their disability.

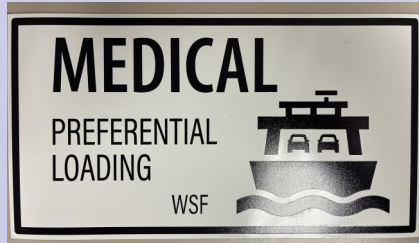
But excluding a child based upon their disability is a solid no. Don't look for this in IDEA, you won't find it there.

It would be a violation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or ADA, depending on the specific scenario. See a lawyer if you cannot resolve this on your own. This is not intended to replace legal advice.

Many times parents email me and ask me "show me where it says....." and they want to know where in IDEA it says something. IDEA is surprisingly quiet on most things. Flip it. Put in on them. You tell them, "Show me where it says in IDEA that you can exclude a child from a field trip because they have an IEP." For full article <https://adayinourshoes.com/yes-child-iep-can-go-field-trip/>

The Island County Accessible Communities Committee received grant funding for:

Ferry Medical Disability Pass Decals & Magnets. These decals and magnets are for preferential medical pass users. To help alleviate confusion as to why some drivers drive straight to the toll booth, "cutting" the line. Driver must show their preferential medical pass provided by Washington State Ferries and State Issued ID at toll booth. The decals & magnets do not replace or substitute the medical pass. If you would like a decal/magnet, email us your snail mail address. t.wheeler-thompson@islandcountywa.gov If you would like to know more about Island County Accessible Communities Committee, email Tiffany (info above)



Let's make our community accessible for all!

"Finding other people that have children that have gone through things similar to what we're going through...that really goes a long way to finding the information you need."

— Julian Saavedra, Host of
The Opportunity Gap podcast

Understood.org

everything at
your fingertips

Parent to Parent FREE Resource Toolkit:

Services, Resources, Community: Support and More

Our resource toolkit can help you identify support, resources and activities in and around Island County. You will receive a folder full of programs, providers, disability & autism resources, support groups, Developmental Disabilities Community Services DDCCS information, our monthly newsletter and more. We just need your snail mail address. Email Tiffany t.wheeler-thompson@islandcountywa.gov Our toolkits and resource guides are also available in English and Spanish on our website <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/198/Parent-to-Parent>

Join us Sunday, September 7th at Fort Nugent Park Noon– 2:00pm

Fort Nugent Park Sheltered Picnic area near the restrooms and playground.

2075 SW Fort Nugent Ave, Oak Harbor

FREE Lunch! Hamburgers, hotdogs, chips, applesauce & dessert. Gluten free buns available. Invite your family and friends to join us. All Ages, All Abilities, All Welcome.

There is limited seating so bring some chairs or blanket to sit.

Island County Parent to Parent offers support and resources to families of children and adults with special needs and/or disabilities. <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/198/Parent-to-Parent>

All events are subject to cancelation/rescheduling. Follow Island County Parent to Parent Facebook Page for up-to date details and updates.

Questions? Call/Text Tiffany (360)632-7539 or Spanish Call/Text Laiza (787)529-6788

Have you checked out our website recently?

Oh boy, there is lots of new content, resources, information and more.

<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/198/Parent-to-Parent>

Hard copies of these resource guides, Family Toolkits and “Island County Transition: School-age to Adulthood In Depth Guide: English” are also available. Email t.wheeler-thompson@islandcountywa.gov. Provide your contact information to ensure a reply.

Island County Disability Resources

- ◆ Island County Disability Resource Guide: English & Spanish
- ◆ Island County Autism Resource Guide: English & Spanish
- ◆ Autism Resources for Families website. English & Spanish
- ◆ Special Education Quick Guide: English
- ◆ Island County Behavioral/Mental Health Resource Guide: English

Other resources: Ages & Stages

- ◆ P2P Resource Birth to Three
- ◆ P2P Resource Three to Six
- ◆ P2P Resource Six to Fourteen
- ◆ P2P Resource Fourteen to Twenty One
- ◆ P2P Resource Twenty One-Adulthood

Transition Support & Resources

- ◆ Transition Packet Info, Timelines and Checklists
- ◆ Transition IEPs, Services, Planning
- ◆ Transition DDA
- ◆ Transition Employment Support
- ◆ Transition HS vs College
- ◆ Transition Advocacy and Social Emotional
- ◆ Transition Resource Federal State Local
- ◆ Transition Legal and Financial Planning
- ◆ Transition Healthcare
- ◆ Transition-Toolkit PAVE

Island County Parent to Parent

Support & Resources for Special Needs Families in Island County

Tiffany Wheeler-Thompson ,Coordinator

105 NW 1st Street Coupeville, WA 98239

(360)632-7539 call/text

Email: t.wheeler-thompson@islandcountwa.gov

****Check us out on Facebook for up-to-date resources, information and activities ****

www.facebook.com/islandcountyparent2parent

We have resource guides on our website:

***Island County Parent to Parent Disability Resource Guide**

***Parent to Parent Autism Spectrum Disorder Resource Guide**

***Special Education Quick Guide**

***Island County Behavioral Health Resource Directory**

***Island County School Age to Adulthood Transition Guides**

<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/198/Parent-to-Parent>

All events are subject to cancellation or rescheduling. Check our Facebook Page before you head out to the event

