



## *Coping With a Birth Injury*

Information for Parents and Families Who Are Raising a Child With Special Needs



*"Every child is gifted. They just unwrap their packages at different times."*

– Unknown Author

**Silvers, Langsam & Weitzman, P.C.**

Home of *MyPhillyLawyer*

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This brochure is produced on behalf of The Birth Injury Team at MyPhillyLawyer. It is provided as a resource for parents and families dealing with a child suffering from a birth injury or birth defect. It addresses the concerns of caregivers and leads them to the information they need to cope with raising a child with special needs.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

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Studies show that a birth injury occurs in five to seven out of every 1000 births. Sadly, many of these birth injuries happen during a difficult labor and delivery, and could have been prevented. When a child suffers a birth injury from physician negligence, or another reason, it can affect not only the child, but also the child's parents, siblings and other close family members.

Parents and caregivers of special needs children have the greatest responsibility in providing as normal of life as possible, while dealing with the financial and emotional effects of the situation. How they cope with the birth injury plays a significant role in how the injured child and others around him or her cope with it too. The information provided in this brochure will provide you with resources to cope and raise a child with a birth injury or birth defect. It covers topics such as:

- Financial benefits that may be available to your child to help offset the cost of medical care and living assistance
- Rehabilitative resources to help your child live as normal of life as possible
- Birth injury support groups for you and your family
- Understanding the effects of a birth injury on the family and tips to help your other children cope with being the sibling of a special needs child



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### **FINANCIAL BENEFITS AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN WITH BIRTH INJURIES**

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When you first learn of your child's birth injury, your first thought is only of the health and well-being of your child. You are willing to do anything in order to help your child live a normal life. Soon after, however, reality hits and you realize that providing the care your child needs will be significant financial burden — one that you may not be able to afford on your own. Thankfully, there are medical benefits and other financial resources available that can help families meet the demands of caring for a special needs child.

Here are some examples of financial benefits that may be available to help you offset the financial costs of raising your child:

- ❑ Your child may be eligible for *Medicaid benefits* if he/she has a qualifying disability and your income is low. Under Medicaid, your child is covered for medical and rehabilitative services, including medications, treatment programs and medical supplies.
- ❑ Your child may qualify for *Supplemental Security Income (SSI)* if he/she has a severe mental or physical disability that significantly limits his or her abilities and is expected to last at least 12 months. These benefits help disabled individuals meet basic needs.
- ❑ *Public grants* may be available in your state or community that offer services and scholarships to your special needs child.
- ❑ If your child's birth injury was caused by negligence or a medical error, you are entitled to seek *financial compensation* for medical costs, rehabilitative care, medical supplies and suffering.



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### **BIRTH INJURY TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION RESOURCES**

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A child suffering from a birth injury will usually need some sort of treatment and rehabilitative care. In some instances, a child can live a normal, happy life after minimal treatment. More serious birth injuries, however, may require a lifetime of rehabilitative techniques to allow the child to function in society. It is important to give your child as many rehabilitative opportunities as you can reasonably provide. These resources can make a difference in your child being able to walk, learn and care for him or herself later on in life.

Your child may have difficulty coping with rehabilitative treatment and special classes. Explain to your child the importance of the treatment — that these surgeries or rehabilitation sessions will help him or her grow and develop like other children. At the same time, praise your child for being brave and enduring such special care.

- The rehabilitative resources your child will need depend on his or her birth injury. Some examples of treatment and rehabilitative resources for children with birth injuries include:
- Physical therapy to help strengthen muscles and improve mobility
- Occupational therapy to learn job functions and how to perform in the work place
- Speech and language therapy to improve speaking skills
- Special education designed with a child's individual developmental needs in mind
- Psychological behavioral therapy to help children with brain injuries and limited speech express emotions and deal with others around them
- Drug therapy to control temperament and aide in developmental improvement



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### **BIRTH INJURY SUPPORT GROUPS**

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Raising a child with a birth injury is never easy. You may not know how to obtain financial resources, who to turn to for medical help, or where the best schools are for special needs children. It can be emotionally difficult, as well, as you and your family adjust to providing care for a child suffering from cerebral palsy, brain injury or another serious birth injury. You may also have questions regarding your child's welfare and how he or she will adjust to being "different" in school.

Birth injury support groups provide you with the resources and knowledge you need to help you through these difficult issues. They can offer the support that only comes from a parent who has dealt with similar experiences and understands your situation.

The following are some local and national support groups that help families with special needs children:

#### **Brachial Plexus Foundation**

210 Spring Haven Circle  
Royersford, PA 19468

<http://www.brachialplexuspalsyfoundation.org/foundation.html>

#### **UCP of Pennsylvania**

1902 Market Street  
Camp Hill, PA 17011  
(717) 761-6129

[ucpofpa@paonline.com](mailto:ucpofpa@paonline.com)

#### **UCP of Philadelphia & Vicinity**

102 East Mermaid Lane  
Philadelphia, PA 19118  
(215) 242-4200

#### **March of Dimes**

1275 Mamaroneck Avenue  
White Plains, NY 10605

<http://www.marchofdimes.com>



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### **BIRTH INJURY EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY**

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You are a parent, not a super robot who can do it all. Caring for a child with a birth injury is a challenging task. You cannot handle it alone. Caregiver depression is a very real illness that many people suffer when they do not receive the proper support in raising a child with special needs.

Here are some tips to help you cope with raising a child with a birth injury:

- 📖 **Sit down with your family and discuss your concerns about raising a special needs child.** Creating an open line of communication ensures you will always have someone who can provide you with emotional support.
- 📖 **Address the important questions upfront.** Who will take care of your child during the day? How will the birth injury affect your finances? What is the long-term prognosis?
- 📖 **Discuss current and future medical needs with your doctor.** Learn as much as you can about the birth injury and what to expect in the months and years ahead.
- 📖 **Talk to special education specialists** who can inform you of any steps you should take to help your child's normal development.

Siblings of children suffering from a birth injury have a particularly difficult time coping with the disability. They may feel resentful or jealous that their sibling is getting special attention. Some children feel guilty because they are healthy while their sibling suffers.

Some ways to help your child cope with his or her sibling's birth injury include:

- 📖 **Give age appropriate information about the birth injury.** Information helps children understand why their brother or sister needs to go to the hospital, attend special classes at school, and get other forms of attention that they do not receive. As children learn about the injury, they are less confused and threatened by it. They learn to appreciate their brother or sister, rather than resent the special attention.
- 📖 **Recognize and acknowledge your child's feelings.** Do not dismiss feelings of anger or resentment, but rather address them by being a support system for your healthy child. Children whose feelings are not addressed are subject to depression, anger issues and withdrawal.
- 📖 **Be a resource for your child.** Keeping an open line of communication between you and your child helps prevent feelings of abandonment. The more open parents are in talking with their children, the more the children will feel comfortable to bring up questions about the injury.
- 📖 **Spend alone time with your child.** Spending alone time with your child is important to help make him or her feel special. Also, recognize your child's accomplishments and unique characteristics.



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### **ABOUT THE BIRTH INJURY TEAM**

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The Birth Injury Team is a subsidiary of Silvers, Langsam & Weitzman, P.C., made up of experienced birth injury attorneys and medical professionals. We are dedicated to serving the needs of parents and family members of children with birth injuries. Using our extensive legal and medical knowledge, we assist parents in understanding their child's birth injury and taking action to provide the proper care throughout his or her life.

Our birth injury lawyers have more than 100 years of combined legal experience handling birth injury cases. We have represented parents in cases involving everything from pregnancy complications and delivery errors, to the failure to prevent injuries in high-risk pregnancies. We are assisted by a team of medical professionals with extensive knowledge of birth injuries and who can provide valuable insight into the cause and long-term effects of the birth injury or defect. Our role is to guide parents through the process of obtaining the justice they deserve.

To learn more about our birth injury practice, call 877-419-0945 to schedule a free initial consultation.

\* Silvers, Langsam & Weitzman, P.C., known throughout the area as MyPhillyLawyer, is located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We serve clients across the United States.