



Stigma and Stereotypes Facing Mothers with Disabilities

The Disabled Parenting Project (DPP) hosted two Mother's Day Twitter Chats. In 2016, 152 people participated and there were 900 tweets. In 2017, 83 people participated and there were 377 tweets. Each Twitter Chat lasted an hour and revealed many key themes. Among the important discussions was a dialogue about the stigma and stereotypes facing mothers with disabilities. The following are key themes and sample quotes.

Misperception: Incapable or Incompetent

Many of the mothers encountered others who questioned their ability to parent their children. Some mothers explained how these misconceptions can lead to involvement with the child welfare system.

- *"When other moms mess up, they blog, when disabled moms do, they fear having [child protection services] take their children."*
- *"That we are unable to have children, that our kids will be [people with disabilities], that we are unequipped to care for children."*
- *"Since moms with disabilities do things differently, we are at risk of losing our kids if well mean strangers get worried."*
- *"Misconceptions: Is that we're incapable. I think for autistic parents, we need more to show our abilities."*
- *"School often assumes I'm not competent."*

Misperception: Unfair to Children

Some of the mothers faced others who believed it was unfair for children to have parents with disabilities.

- *"That it is unfair to the child. It's just assuming that we can't do anything because we are disabled."*
- *"The pervasive assumption that having a disabled mom makes our kids life harder."*
- *"The assumption that my kids (6, 8, and 10 weeks) 'take care' of me and their dad. Not the case-and a little laughable!"*
- *"That my daughter has less of a childhood because of me and that I can't play with her or take care of her."*