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For Immediate Release

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network convened a one-day think tank at Boston College to examine the challenges facing working parents who care for children with disabilities.

Given that 1 in 7 children under age 18 or approximately 10.2 million children in the U.S. have special health care needs, this annual conference explored how working parents coordinate their children's medical and child care needs in addition to their work responsibilities.

7/8/2008 - Boston, MA (The Sloan Work and Family Research Network) – On May 6, 2008, the [Sloan Work and Family Research Network](http://www.bc.edu/wfnetwork) hosted a panel meeting at Boston College on “*Work-Family Issues for Employed Parents of Children with Disabilities*.” The conference addressed current research efforts, workplace best practices and existing public policy in order to develop an action plan for future change. This action plan will be released on the Sloan Work and Family Research Network’s [Blog](#) later this summer. For the past five years, the Sloan Work and Family Research Network – the premier online destination for work and family information – has convened panel meetings to promote discussion about important work-family issues from diverse disciplinary perspectives.

“Although considerable attention has been paid to the work-family issues of working parents, the needs of parents with children who have physical, emotional and learning disabilities have not received significant attention. The number of families affected, the stress on family relationships, and the impediments to workforce participation are considerable,” according to the Sloan Work and Family Research Network’s Director, Judi Casey.

Working parents face daily challenges in meeting the demanding needs of their children with disabilities, while maintaining their work, family and life commitments. A number of trends have increased the number of families affected with an estimated 22% of households with children reporting at least one child with a disability. First, medical advances have improved the survival rate at birth for some children with disabilities, many of whom may need a lifetime of medical care. Secondly, new medical advances provide care to children who would have otherwise been untreated. Third, there is an increase in the number of children with illnesses, such as asthma and Down’s syndrome. These families report higher divorce rates as well as considerable family stress, due to



the time and costs associated with their myriad of responsibilities in the home, medical, school and work arenas. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2007), 13.5% of parents, caring for children with disabilities, spent 11 or more hours per week coordinating care for their children. Currently, legislation is pending in a number of states to address the needs of working parents who have children with disabilities.

Nineteen attendees from the US and Canada participated in this one day event including: Betsy Anderson, Family Voices: Rosalind C. Barnett, Brandeis University: Ana Maria Brannan, Vanderbilt University: Eileen Brennan, Portland State University: Judi Casey, Boston College: Christina Fluent, MA Consortium for Children with Special Health Care Needs, New England SERVE: Sybil Goldman, Georgetown University: Sofia Jones, The McGraw-Hill Companies: Jamie Kass, Canadian Union of Postal Workers: Judy Kendall, Oregon Health Sciences University: Frances Lynch, Kaiser Permanente - Center for Health Research: Shirley Porterfield, University of Missouri-St. Louis: Elizabeth Powers, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Institute of Government Affairs: Julie Rosenzweig, Portland State University: Linda Roundtree, Roundtree Consulting, LLC: Stephen Sweet, Ithaca College: Marji Warfield, Brandeis University: Yolanda Wu, A Better Balance: The Work & Family Legal Center and Christine Young, Ernst & Young LLP.

For more information about issues facing working parents with children with disabilities or to learn more about work-family issues, please go to the Sloan Work and Family Research Network web site at www.bc.edu/wfnetwork.

About the Sloan Work and Family Network

Founded in 1997, the [Sloan Work and Family Research Network](http://www.bc.edu/wfnetwork) is the premier online destination for work and family information. The Sloan Network offers multi-disciplinary, credible teaching resources, evidence-based information on workforce issues and unbiased policy data about work and family topics for academics, workplace practitioners and state public policy makers. In addition to special needs, the Sloan Network provides information on various work and family issues; including child and afterschool care, multi-generational workforce, accommodating work arrangements, low wage workers, family leave, breastfeeding, domestic violence, military families and overwork.

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