


PARENT EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

**EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY FOR
YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION**


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DO YOU EVER FEEL LIKE THIS?

DO YOU WANT TO FEEL LIKE THIS?



Another frustrating IEP meeting! What am I going to do?



Wow! I can't believe how well that IEP meeting went!

SUCCESS BEGINS WITH YOU!

OVERVIEW

- ✓ Let's Review...*and* What is an Advocate?
- ✓ Effective Advocates Learn Their Rights
- ✓ Effective Advocates are Organized
- ✓ Effective Advocates Plan & Prepare
- ✓ Effective Advocacy during the IEP Meeting
- ✓ Effective Advocacy after the IEP Meeting
- ✓ Effective Advocates Learn How to Problem Solve
- ✓ The School's Wish List
- ✓ Tips for the Parent Advocate

LET'S REVIEW....AND WHAT IS AN ADVOCATE?

What is the purpose of an IEP?

- ✓ The purpose of the IEP is to make sure that everyone—the student, parents, and school staff knows what the specifics of the educational program are and how each will be implemented. YOU have the opportunity to be one of the key monitors of this plan—this is the role of an advocate.
- ✓ The IEP is developed during an IEP meeting. The people who are concerned with the student's education meet, discuss, and develop the IEP goals. YOU have the opportunity to be one of the key developers of this plan. This is the role of an advocate.

EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES LEARN THEIR RIGHTS

× What are my rights?

- + Do your homework: read, read, and read some more
- + Ask questions, online trainings and teleconferences, connect to a parent advocacy group, Facebook group, or face-to-face chat group

× How do I learn more?

- + <http://www2.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html>
- + <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/ferpa.pdf>
- + <http://www.wrightslaw.com>

EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES ARE ORGANIZED

✘ Roll up your sleeves!

- + Preparation=Empowerment=Effective Team=Your Child's Success
- + Learn to speak the language

✘ Compile records

- + Request records from school
- + Save work samples, assessments, correspondence

✘ Create a System

- + IEP Binder
- + Current and archived records storage
- + Documentation methods

EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES ARE ORGANIZED

- ✘ Identify and Articulate your Child's Needs
 - + Create a primer for your team.
 - ✘ Don't think in terms of services, think in terms of your child's needs-don't focus on the disability but on what you observe
 - + Document what you observe is working and not working in the current IEP
 - + Include your child's perspective

EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES PLAN

× Begin at the End

- + Have a good idea of how you would like to see your child progress this year, next year, the year after-consider as parent's goals for this IEP
- + Have a ultimate goal in mind for your child's educational outcome: Degree choice? Post Secondary dreams? Family, social, and job hopes? Plan with that in mind

EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES PREPARE

This is business-be ready to do business. YOU are a key team member!

- + The Parent Agenda
- + The Student Agenda
- + Anticipate and have ready your rationale
- + Put thoughts and points in writing
- + Consult your calendar-have options ready
- + Plan B-Consider and plan out alternate proposals

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY *DURING* THE IEP MEETING

- + Attitude is everything; deal in facts not feelings, remove unnecessary emotion; breathe!
- + Dress appropriately , behave in a businesslike manner
- + Have your materials organized and ready
- + Participate in writing goals, accommodations and modifications- consider if the goals and objectives are appropriate for your child's individual needs.
- + Remember, YOU know your child best; you are an expert, too!

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY *DURING* THE IEP MEETING

× SPEAK UP!

- + Don't understand something? Speak up!
- + Need something repeated or clarified? Speak up!
- + Agree or disagree with a recommendation or rationale? Speak up!
- + Think the team needs to be aware of something or add something? Speak up!
- + Be an active listener-take notes, audio record, write down action items and list person responsible , repeat back “What I think I heard you say..”
- + **Ask W questions: who, what, when, where, why**

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY *AFTER* THE IEP MEETING

- ✘ Read and Review the IEP
 - + Revisit your Parent and Student Agendas
 - + Sign and return IEP...or...
 - + Reconvene to make revisions, reconsider

- ✘ Communicate
 - + Write a thank you note or email
 - + Follow up with an action item list with names
 - + **RRP**: Initiate **R**egular, **R**elevant, and **P**ositive correspondence

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY *AFTER* THE IEP MEETING

- ✘ Document events of the meeting
 - + Use same method: forms, minutes, checklist
 - + Record action items: List names and position
- ✘ Organize documents received at the meeting
 - + Create new binder, file in existing binder
 - + Master List-list where to find documents
- ✘ Keep tabs on your child's Progress
 - + Create a running record

EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES LEARN HOW TO PROBLEM SOLVE

- ✘ Diplomacy is King
 - + Remember these are the team members that you will likely need to continue working with
 - + Learn how to rephrase criticism to motivate the team to positive action, “...and now let’s discuss how we can...”
- ✘ Beware the trap of faulty thinking:
 - ✘ Blaming
 - ✘ Excuses
 - ✘ Stonewalling or Escalating
 - + Faulty thinking leads to problems building an effective team, which leads to ineffective strategies, inefficiency and lag time putting supports in place for your child!

THE SCHOOL'S WISH LIST FOR PARENT ADVOCATES

- For you to be educated about IDEA 2004
- For you to be familiarized with the IEP purpose, process, and protocol
- For you to participate in the meetings and share your thoughts and concerns and include your child if appropriate
- For you to view the school based team as a group of professionals that are dedicated to caring about and assisting your child in his education
- For you to be aware that the school is obligated to support the educational needs of the student, not necessarily the clinical needs
- **Most importantly, for you to understand and articulate your child's needs to the team so that those needs can be identified and addressed as accurately and effectively as possible**

TIPS FOR THE PARENT ADVOCATE

- ✘ IEP meetings can be called at any time by YOU or the school
- ✘ IEP meetings can, at any point, be adjourned and reconvened upon YOUR request
- ✘ IEPs can be amended throughout the year
- ✘ IEP meetings do not have a set time limit and must be scheduled at your convenience
- ✘ Bring a photo of your child to the meeting
- ✘ You may bring a friend, family member, or anyone with an interest in your child's education with you to the meeting
- ✘ You may request school or county personnel to attend
- ✘ **Power of the Pen:**
 - + Don't sign the IEP at the meeting
 - + Write letters for results

TELL YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY!

Register for Autism Pensacola's
Parent Empowerment Program

Empower Yourself to Empower Your Child

To learn more visit us at www.autismpensacola.org