



Working for the rights of
individuals with disabilities

WHAT CAN I DO TO ADVOCATE FOR MY CHILD?

As a parent of a child with disabilities, you are the most important person in your child's education. You know your child better than anyone else. You can be an effective advocate for your child by doing the following:

- Know your child's rights and your rights as a parent and be assertive about them.
- Learn everything you possibly can about your child's abilities and disabilities.
- Seek out other parents and organizations for information and support and emerging educational practices.
- Learn to recognize a quality school program.
- Attend all meetings concerning your child.
- Keep copies of your child's records.
- Encourage your child's teachers to keep you informed of your child's progress or problems.
- Ask questions. Share information concerning your child. Let the teacher and the school district know how you feel about your child's program.

Parents are valuable and equal members of the IEP team and any group that makes decisions about their child. While parents may feel intimidated at meetings by the number of school district personnel sitting around the table, it is nonetheless crucial for you to be assertive in explaining your positions and concerns. At the beginning of the meeting, express the issues you want to have resolved at the meeting (if you have not already done this in writing prior to the meeting). You will feel more confident at meetings if you take the time to prepare.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREPARE BEFORE A MEETING?

- Visit the classroom to watch the child at school
- Review information in the child's records, including evaluation results.
- Think about questions or concerns you have. Be prepared to bring them up at the meeting.
- If appropriate, talk with the child about the child's feelings about school, subjects, and classmates.

HOW CAN I BE MORE EFFECTIVE AT THE MEETING?

- Bring friend or advocate to attend the meeting to take notes so you can concentrate on the discussion.
- Bring relevant medical documents or reports from outside specialists.
- Tell the team about your observations of your child's positive and negative behaviors; changes in the family or home that might have an effect on the child's learning; how the child learns best; what works as positive reinforcement for the child; and, the child's self-help skills.
- Tell the team about your suggestions for goals and objectives, related services, supports, modifications and placement.
- Work towards consensus. There is no majority vote.

CAN I TAPE RECORD THE MEETING?

Parents and advocates may want to tape record IEP meetings. Oregon state law allows the tape recording of a meeting by a participant if the tape recorder is in plain view. Sometimes taping can affect the tone of the meeting. As an option to taping, parents might want to bring a friend, relative or advocate to take notes and provide support.

From OAC Website

This information has been provided for you by the Oregon Parent Training and Information Center. If you need further information or assistance, please contact our Special Education Help-Line at 888-891-6784, or our office at 888-505-2673.