

PROMOTING IEP TEAM COLLABORATION

TIPS FOR PARENTS....

- ◆ Share the positive gains, progress and changes you are seeing with the team. Give credit where credit is due.
- ◆ Discuss what your son or daughter needs, and what is appropriate, with an open mind. Oftentimes, others bring ideas that are well-worth considering.
- ◆ Decisions made by the team need to be based on data (information). Evaluations and assessments are needed to fully understand your student's needs. Progress reports, information from observations (what we can see and document), and work samples are types of data. If information is needed, ask for it.
- ◆ Keep what you share short and to-the-point. Ask yourself questions like, "What is it that I would like to be done differently?" to help you focus in on what you want to talk about. Make suggestions to the team.
- ◆ Asking questions to get information you need is an effective communication strategy. Ask "what", "where", "when", and "how" questions. If possible, avoid "why" questions which can appear to place blame.
- ◆ Do not hesitate to ask: "Can you show me what that looks like?" or "Can you describe what happened for me?" or "Do you have a sample I can look at?"
- ◆ Because teams discuss many things about a student when problem-solving, don't forget to return to any previous point and ask, "So, about this issue, what have we decided on that?"
- ◆ Remember to be polite and respectful when you disagree with others. Make every effort to keep the conversation productive.
- ◆ Your IEP team decisions should always be recorded in writing and shared with everyone on the team. That way all team members have the same information and know what has been agreed upon.

The Parent Advocate

Supporting Parents in Their Role as Advocate for their Student with a Disability in Need of Special Education Services



Coaches are experienced and knowledgeable parents of individuals with disabilities who provide problem-solving support to help parents make sure that the special education needs of their student are met.

What does a Parent Advocate do?

- Encourages and helps parents navigate and resolve concerns with ongoing communication and collaboration with IEP and Section 504 teams in Utah school districts and charter schools.
- Provides confidential consultations to gain an in-depth understanding of the concerns and help frame questions.
- Helps parents learn new skills in advocating for their own child.
- May attend school meetings related to concerns, when needed.

Contact the Utah Parent Center for information and support:
801-272-1051 or Toll Free at 1-800-468-1160
www.utahparentcenter.org

What your Parent Advocate *does not* do:

- ✓ Tell you what to do or not to do.
- ✓ Make choices or decisions for you.
- ✓ Provide legal advice or represent you.

YOU CAN EXPECT YOUR PARENT ADVOCATE TO:

- ✓ Interact positively with you and with school personnel.
- ✓ Support an environment of collaboration and mutual respect.
- ✓ Share knowledge in a manner that is non-confrontational and helpful.
- ✓ Listen intently for your underlying concerns and ask clarifying questions to make enhance understanding.
- ✓ Help you prepare by encouraging and supporting you to be confident in your essential role as a member of the team as your child's best advocate.
- ✓ Support you in being appropriately assertive, expressing points of view effectively, while respecting the rights and beliefs of others.
- ✓ Encourage you to be reasonable with timelines and allow the team to go through needed processes.
- ✓ Encourage and support you when you need to ask questions, share your point-of-view, or appropriately communicate your disagreement with information being discussed.
- ✓ Encourage the sharing of information to help make sure that you have the information you need to make informed choices and decisions.
- ✓ Support professionals who are part of the team to play their role in each specialty.
- ✓ Help you keep the team focused on your son's or daughter's needs.
- ✓ Help you get information so you can explore options.



What do we hear about the support of a Parent Advocate?

FEEDBACK FROM FAMILIES

- ◆ “That was the most productive meeting I’ve ever attended.”
- **Parent**
- ◆ “[The Parent Advocate] was able to help immensely and because of her we were able to get several things we [thought our son needed] socially” - **Parent**
- ◆ “[The Parent Advocate] was very kind and considerate. She understood my challenges and was empathetic” - **Parent**

FEEDBACK FROM PROFESSIONALS

- ◆ “All of them are professional and very helpful. [I have their] brochure on the front desk and refer many families because [Parent Advocates] will help and make the process work smoother.” -

THE PARENT ADVOCATE CANNOT GUARANTEE CERTAIN SERVICES OR RESULTS.

ALL EDUCATIONAL DECISIONS ARE MADE *BY THE TEAM* BASED ON IMPORTANT STUDENT INFORMATION.

