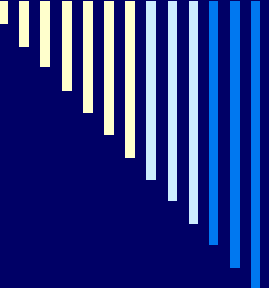


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# Independent Child Advocate Program (ICAP)

*“Solving Special Education  
Disputes Locally”*

Sonoma County Special Education  
Local Plan Area

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# It's All About Relationships and having a conversation

“Human conversation is the most ancient and easiest way to cultivate conditions for change—personal change, community and organizational change, planetary change. **If we can sit together and talk about what's important to us, we begin to come alive”...**



turning to one another  
simple conversations to restore hope to the future  
By Margaret J Wheatley

# “Difficult Conversations”

- Difficult conversations defined as conversations where:

- Opinions vary
- Stakes are high
- Emotions run strong



- Sound like IEP/SPED meetings you've attended?

- (*Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High*, Paterrson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler)

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# It's All About Relationships

Fear of each other also keeps us apart.



Relationships are all there is.

Conversation is the natural way that humans think together.

Margaret J Wheatley

Turning to one another; Simple conversations to restore hope to the future

# Independent Child Advocate Program

- A quick, easy to use, local option for resolving special education disputes between parents and school districts.
- A process that supports and guides parents and district staff to collaboratively develop mutually agreeable solutions.



# What is ICAP?

- A *results oriented* process
- Focused on meeting the *child's needs*
- While maintaining *positive working relationships* between parents and school district staff





# How does the **ICAP** work?

- **ADR Brochure** is distributed at EVERY IEP meeting;
- When an issue arises: Parent/district contacts **SELPA ADR Coordinator** who completes a referral;
- ADR Coordinator provides **Independent Advocate** with referral and contact information;
- Advocate contacts **parent/district-obtains agreement to proceed**;

# How does the ICAP work?

- Independent Child Advocate does whatever is needed to resolve the dispute; may include: a review of the student's file, interviews, observations, meetings;
- Develop a report of findings and recommendations;
- All parties meet and receive report of findings within weeks of referral.







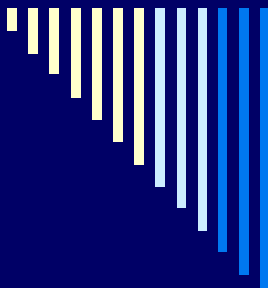
# Program/Fiscal Structure

- 40 Sonoma County School Districts;
- Fund (off the top) an **Independent Advocate** position at a local not-for-profit agency (**solely dedicated to serve local school districts**)
- Advocate is available to assist parents/districts in **resolving special education disputes**;
- Similar to “**Ombudsman**” role;



# What are the advantages of using **ICAP**?

- **ICAP** is **QUICK**:
  - Begins within 24 – 48 hrs. of request
- **ICAP** is **EASY**:
  - One call starts the process
- **ICAP** is **LOCAL**:
  - Maintain Control - Avoid State Hearing
- **ICAP** is **Cost Effective**:
  - Saves \$\$\$



# Why not use the State of California Hearing Process?

## Litigation/Due Process

Legal Authority

Rules of Evidence, Proof,  
Substantiation

Binding Decisions

Penalty/Pain, Win, Lose,  
Adversarial

## ICAP

Relationships, Associations

Talk, Interaction, Collaboration,  
Discussion, Conversation

Agreement, Understanding

Rewarding, Harmony, Satisfaction



# History of Success

- In 6 years:
  - 94.4% of all referred cases have been successfully resolved w/o state intervention
  - 268 cases referred - 253 cases successfully resolved
  - Only 4 cases referred to Hearing
- Over \$ 6 million in savings to schools



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# Skills necessary to staff the position:

- *Embrace the spirit of “ADR”*
- Knowledge/experience in **SPED law**;
- **Teaching/Classroom** experience;
- Ability to **understand and embrace parents issues**;
- Experience in **mediation and negotiation**;
- Flexibility and willingness to work to find solutions **“outside the box”**;



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# Annual Program Cost:

- Contract with Agency
  - (Salary, benefits, Admin).....\$ 75,598
- Telephone expenses.....\$ 500
- Office Supplies.....\$ 500
- Travel costs.....\$ 2,000
  
- Total Program Costs:.....\$ 78,598
- 
- Ave. cost of fair hearing.....\$ 30,000



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# TRUST AND THE ADR PROCESS

- *T*ogether families and districts work collaboratively.
- *R*especting their knowledge as equal partners in the process.
- *U*nderstanding diversity and respecting the values and cultures that exist.
- *S*hared responsibility for decision making.
- *T*rust leads to building relationships that help meet the needs of children.

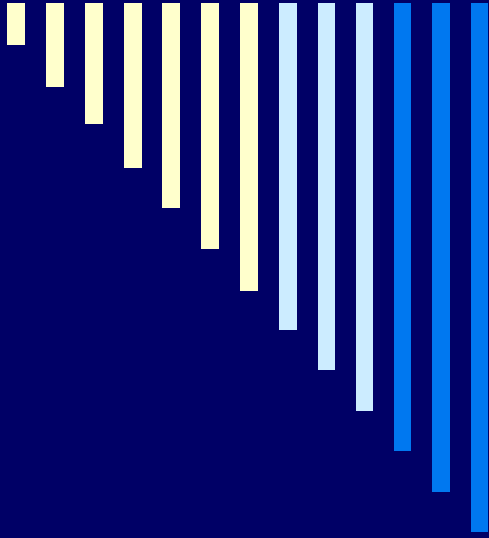
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**BECOME AN ADR STAR**







*“Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children.”*

*Chief Sitting Bull*

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For More Information on  
the **Independent Child  
Advocate Program:**

**Carlo Rossi**  
**Independent Child Advocate**  
**707- 829-6690**