



## Common Education Challenges

- As part of the educational program of a child, there can be issues related to the amount, variety, or quality of services provided. Every child, every school, and every community is different. It is important to advocate for your child's needs throughout his or her education.
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that a child who has a disability is offered a free appropriate public education (FAPE) which provides special education and related services to meet his or her specific needs. Contact the school Director of Special Services with any questions or issues relating to the child's education program.
- You can call a meeting to discuss issues that are of concern. Because parents are active participants in the decision-making team, you can ask questions and make suggestions. You can provide recommendations from healthcare providers or other professionals that may be valuable to the child's educational program. The child's educational team may not agree with information or recommendations you have offered. However, many times, with some negotiation, a compromise can be reached.
- Take notes when meeting with a representative from the school or other professional who provides services for your child. This lets them know that you are interested in your child's education and what they have to offer. This can also serve as a record of the discussion. You can use a recording device at a meeting, but must let them know ahead of time.
- Whether you agree or disagree with the school team, it is very important to document all communication related to your child's education. E-mail correspondence is an excellent way to communicate as there are times and dates attached with each message. If sending a letter, request a return receipt in order to have confirmation of delivery. When submitting a letter or documentation by hand, ask for a signature of receipt. When contacting the school by phone, follow up with an e-mail to document the points that were made.
- At each Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting for your child, the school team should provide you with access to a document which contains your child's educational rights. If you disagree with a school's decision and can't find a compromise, identify and review the process to file a complaint, request mediation, or due process.
- There are advocates who can help with educational issues related to your child with ASD. Some advocates can attend IEP and other meetings to help support the child's rights. Credible advocates understand education terminology and laws and can help negotiate with the school system to get the services the child needs.

## Helpful Resources

- **Council for Exceptional Children**  
<http://www.cec.sped.org/>
- **FAPE.org**  
[www.FAPE.org](http://www.FAPE.org)
- **Friends Like You. Friends Like Me.**  
[www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness](http://www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness)
- **IDEA Partnership**  
<http://www.ideapartnership.org/>
- **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – U.S. Department of Education**  
<http://idea.ed.gov/>
- **The Legal Rights of Children With Autism: An Expert Interview (Medscape)**  
<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/508088>
- **National Center for Learning Disabilities**  
[www.nclld.org](http://www.nclld.org)
- **Pacer Center**  
<http://www.pacer.org/>
- **Parent Technical Assistance Center Network**  
<http://www.parentcenternetwork.org/>
- **Understanding Special Education.com**  
<http://www.understandingspecialeducation.com/special-education-law.html>
- **U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)**  
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/nidrr/index.html>
- **What is IDEA?**  
<http://www.nclld.org/disability-advocacy/learn-ld-laws/idea/what-is-idea>
- **Wrightslaw**  
[www.wrightslaw.com](http://www.wrightslaw.com)

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