

Choosing the right Special Education Advocate

- Special Education Advocates should have knowledge of the federal and state laws related to special education services, and should research policies and procedures used in your school district or by your Early Intervention (EI) agency. Your advocate should be able to explain the laws and policies to you in a way that is easily understandable.
- Special Education Advocates should be familiar with different kinds of assessments and reports in order to explain them and make recommendations.
- Special Education Advocates can refer you to private service professionals who can conduct Independent Educational Evaluations (IEEs) or provide other services as needed.
- Special Education Advocates can review and explain your child's educational record, including evaluations and testing, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and progress reports.
- Special Education Advocates should know the services and supports which your child may need, and objectively analyze the quality of your child's education program to determine if your child's needs are being met.
- Special Education Advocates can help you prepare for meetings related to your child's special education program with an emphasis on meetings to discuss initial evaluations, reevaluations and IEPs or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs).
- Special Education Advocates can help parents write appropriate IEP/IFSP goals and objectives and suggest appropriate supports and accommodations.
- Special Education Advocates can accompany parents to meetings and assist in the negotiation process between parents and the school.
- Special Education Advocates can help draft letters and written requests to your school or EI agency.
- Special Education Advocates can assist you in understanding dispute resolution procedures and can help you assess the strength of your case. The Advocate should refer you to a Special Education Attorney when needed.
- Special Education Advocates can teach you how to become a better, more effective advocate for you and your child and help you identify ways for your child to become more independent and able to advocate for him or herself.