



## Effective Parent Advocacy Outline

### Goal for Presentation: Become an Effective Parent Advocate

#### Parents as Partners with School Professionals:

- Work together
- Share Goals
- Contribute different skills
- Solve Problems
- Advocate together

#### Why be an Advocate?

- Your experiences are valuable
- You know when something is or isn't working
- You have ideas
- You have the most long-term connection to **your** child

#### Six Skills to be an effective advocate:

1. Child's Disability
2. Key Players
3. Rights and Responsibilities
4. Organization
5. Communication
6. Disagreement Resolution

#### Skill #1: Understand Your Child's Disability

Do research, ask questions, read reports because understanding helps you:

- ❖ Know which services are appropriate
- ❖ Have high expectations
- ❖ Find the right accommodations and support
- ❖ Be able to use resources to know more!

#### Skill #2: Know the Key Players

- The key players are:
  1. You
  2. LEA
  3. Special Ed Teacher
  4. General Ed Teacher
- Other team players can include:  
Know the player's roles at the IEP and how to find their contact information
  1. Related service providers (OT, PT, SPT, etc.)
  2. Someone for support or with knowledge of the child (TCFEF, etc.)

#### Skill #3: Know Your Rights and Procedural Safeguards

Learn about them by...

- Reading the school handbook
- Calling TCFEF
- Joining a disability group
- Getting a copy of Parent's Rights (IDEA)

## Some Resources to Get Started

- [The Center for Exceptional Families](#)
- [Home - Disability Rights Arkansas](#)
- [Special Education Unit at the Arkansas Department of Education](#)
- [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#)
- [Center for Parent Information and Resources](#)

## Skill #4: Become Well Organized: The Center for Exceptional Families Binder!

### Skill #5: Use Clear and Effective Communication

#### Tips for Verbal Communication

- ❖ Problem solve together for solutions
- ❖ Focus on your child
- ❖ Show respect & expect it also
- ❖ Work together
- ❖ Ask questions, rephrase for clarity
- ❖ Say thanks

#### Tips for Written Communication

- Send to the right person
- Sign and date
- Focus on 1-2 issues
- Be to the point
- Set a deadline for a reply
- Give your contact info

Remember to keep a copy for yourself!

#### When you Disagree

- Identify the issue
- Realize NO ONE has all the answers
- Be willing to compromise when possible
- Try to stay open-minded
- Apologize and accept apologies when appropriate, mistakes happen

### Skill #6: Know How to Resolve Disagreements

#### Informal Processes:

- Talk to the team first and give them an opportunity to work with you
- Call a parent mentor from TCFEF

#### Formal Processes:

- Facilitation
- Mediation
- Complaints
- Due Process

#### Resources on Dispute Resolution

- [Division of Elementary and Secondary Education - Offices - Special Education - Dispute Resolution \(arkansas.gov\)](#)
- [Arkansas Special Education Mediation Project | William H. Bowen School of Law | University of Arkansas at Little Rock \(ualr.edu\)](#)
- [CADRE | The Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education \(cadreworks.org\)](#)

Thank you for your participation!

