

Solving Problems Informally

Guidance for Parents

September 2013

When questions or concerns arise regarding your child's special education program, attempt to address the issue with the teacher(s) first. If you have questions or concerns about your child's special education program, you may also request that the school reconvene your child's individualized education program (IEP) team. This request should be in writing, and should be given to the special education teacher or team leader, with a copy to the school principal. At that time, keep in mind:

- Provide the District with any Information that would be helpful in making educational decisions.
- The IEP team needs to work cooperatively to meet your child's needs.
- Each member has valuable information to share. Be an active listener, ask questions and make your views known.
- No one member should come to the meeting ready with a solution or plan that cannot be discussed or revised. Each member has a responsibility to share in the process.
- Keep a copy of educational records, medical records, etc. for your files.

Effective communication is very important to clarify the concern(s) and to assist in the problem-solving process.

- If your questions and concerns are not successfully addressed by your child's school, make an appointment to talk to the special education director.
- If you are still not satisfied with how your questions and concerns have been addressed, make an appointment with the superintendent or director of your child's school.

You may also contact the organizations listed below for information about what the federal and state requirements say regarding your issue or concern, next steps to take resolve the problem, support groups in your area, training opportunities and events, and other resources available to assist with the special education process.

Parent and District Resources for Dispute Resolution

Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit

Parents seeking guidance on how to resolve disputes at the local level may contact the Special Education Unit at the Arkansas Department of Education at 501.682.4221 and ask to speak to an Advisor assigned to the District or Charter School. The ADE/SEU Program Advisor may be called regarding special education matters. The information may also be accessed from the website <http://arksped.k12.ar.us/DisputeResolution/>

Facilitated IEP Meeting

Facilitation utilizes an impartial facilitator to guide the process of the meeting and to assist members of the IEP team in communicating effectively with the goal of developing an acceptable IEP. The role of the facilitator is to lead the IEP meeting by helping parties work through the agenda and ensure that individual IEP Team members are able to participate in a productive and balanced meeting. Facilitators are not to make decisions for the IEP Team, provide legal advice, record minutes, or write IEP agreements for the team. Facilitators provide clarification and share information as appropriate, and assist parties problem-solve areas of concern. Facilitation is not required by law; it is a service provided at no cost to parents and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) by the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit, to the UALR William H. Bowen School of Law, Mediation Clinic. The LEA can assist with the request of a facilitated IEP or for more information, contact the mediation office at (866) 273-3959, (501) 324-9939, or <http://ualr.edu/law/clinical-programs/mediation>.

Mediation

The Arkansas Special Education Mediation Project (ASEMP) is different from other mediation programs in that it is not court-centered. The ASEMP gives parents and schools an alternative to filing a state complaint or requesting a due process hearing. Trained professional mediators assist parties in finding effective solutions to the problems affecting educational services for children with disabilities. For more information or to request mediation services contact the mediation office at (866) 273-3959, (501) 324-9939, or <http://ualr.edu/law/clinical-programs/mediation>.

Arkansas Parent Training and Information Center (PTI)

The Arkansas Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) is a statewide federal grant program operated through the *Arkansas Disability Coalition*. The goals of the center are to empower parents of children with disabilities in their roles as parents, decision makers, and advocates for their children and promote parent/professional partnerships. The PTI works collectively with school districts to improve outcomes for children with disabilities by providing information, support, resources, and training. www.adcpti.org 501.614.7020 or (800) 223-1330.

CADRE – The National Center on Dispute Resolution in Special Education

The Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE) works to increase the nation's capacity to effectively resolve special education disputes, reducing the use of expensive adversarial processes. CADRE works with state and local education and early intervention systems, parent centers, families and educators to improve programs and results for children with disabilities. Additional information on resolving disputes at the local level can be found by visiting the website of the Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE) at <http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/>.

Disability Rights Center

The Disability Rights Center of Arkansas (DRC) is the federally funded and authorized Protection and Advocacy (P&A) system and Client Assistance Program (CAP) for people with disabilities in Arkansas. DRC is authorized to advocate for and protect human, civil and legal rights of all Arkansas with disabilities consistent with federal law. DRC services are provided free of charge. DRC, a non-profit agency, is independent from state or local government. www.arkdisabilityrights.org (800) 482-1174 (toll free) or (501) 296-1775