



CHILDREN'S DISABILITIES INFORMATION COALITION-PARENT RESOURCE CENTER

Parent Advocacy Tips

1. Document everything in writing.

The first rule of advocacy is that if it isn't written down, it didn't happen! Follow-up on every conversation with therapists, staff, administration, and others, with a note or letter saying, "These are the points made during our conversation as I recall. If you disagree with the contents as I have stated them please respond in writing as soon as possible. "If this is a very serious matter such as health or safety issues, or if you just want proof of receipt, send the letter certified mail with a return receipt. It may seem like a lot of extra work, but if there is an ongoing problem this will help resolve it much quicker. Also, when you put something in writing results are often obtained quicker as you are taken more seriously.

2. Write a general narrative about your child.

It should be concise and no longer than two pages. Include your child's age, diagnosis, likes, dislikes, abilities, schooling received, therapies, current placement, etc. Also write what you would envision for your child as their possible outcome. For example, if you see your child in a community integrated living situation working and socializing within the community then write that down. It doesn't matter where they currently are, or what funding constraints you've been told of, this is your vision for your child. Save this document on a computer so you can make adjustments as needed, or add an updated page when appropriate. This letter can be used in many ways Give it to new personnel working with your child, attach it to letters advocating services for your child, etc.

3. Write to your local, state, and national representatives and senator introducing yourself as a constituent family and attach your letter describing your child.

Don't complain or ask for anything, just say "Hi, How are you, here we are." Then when you do write for assistance or to voice an opinion, they are familiar with you. They know you are a proactive person who knows what they are talking about.

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