

Advocating for Your Child

Steps to Help on Your Advocacy Journey:

Do your Homework



- Gather facts and information
- Speak with other families who have walked in your shoes
- Contact agencies/organizations who can help you
- Learn everything you can

Learn How the System Works



- There are rules and guidelines you need to know within each system
- Learn who the “go to” person is
- Follow the appropriate steps
- Know what the process is if you do not agree



Plan and Prepare



- Planning can help prevent problems
- Write down ideas and suggestions
- Ask for help if you need it
- Have samples and recommendations from others
- Decide exactly what it is you want accomplished

Documentation



- Create a binder
 - Phone log
 - Written correspondence (e-mails, letters, etc.)
 - Keep evaluation data, plans, reports, recommendations, etc.
- Request everything in writing
- Have any policies, procedures, guidelines provided to you in writing
- If it's not in writing it does not exist



KY-SPIN

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Ask Questions, Listen to Answers



- If you do not ask, you will not know
- No question is a dumb question
- When asking a questions keep in mind these two types of questions:
 - Open-ended questions: requires explanation
 - Close-ended questions: yes or no answer
- Actively listen and do not make prejudgments

Identify Issues



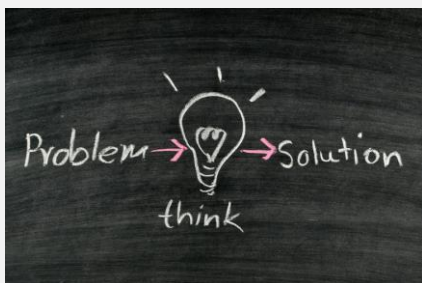
- Make a list, prioritize based on your child's needs
- Go through the Who, What, Why, Where, When, and How this effects your child
- Define and describe the issue from all angles
- Be proactive versus reactive
- Develop strategies and solutions
- Don't spend your time looking to blame someone

Communication and Collaboration



- Build a relationships and partnerships
- You are an important part of the team
- Communicate your needs and desires for your child
- You will not always agree with one another
- If you feel overwhelmed or upset step away from the situation/meeting
- Be respectful and open to others viewpoints

Propose Solutions



- Offer ways to address issues
- Be an active part of the solutions
- Provide documentation and proven methods
- Offer suggestions and ways to address the issue (such as: "We do this at home and it works.")
- Be open to others' ideas and possible compromises that achieve what is best for the child

You are Not Alone



- Access parent support groups in your area
- Contact organizations/agencies for help
- Meet/talk with families similar to yours at school, doctors offices, etc.