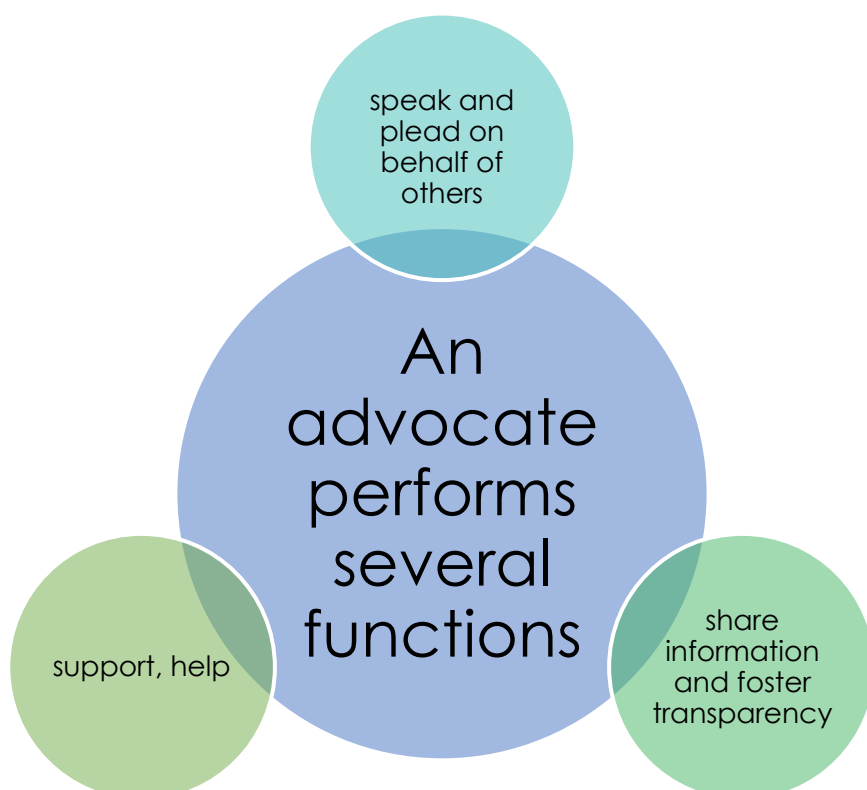


ALL ABOUT ADVOCATES

Why?

Good special education services are intensive and expensive. Resources are limited. If you have a child with special needs, you will likely need to utilize various types of information, skills and tools to get what your child needs.



Who?

There are several different kinds of advocates.

One of the most critical advocates? **Parents!**

Parents are natural advocates for their children!

Other types of advocates include:

- Educational advocates
- Lay advocates
- School Personnel
- Lawyers

What?

Effective advocacy includes several important components. These include:

- ✓ Gathering Information
- ✓ Learning the Rules of the Game
- ✓ Planning and Preparation
- ✓ Keeping Written Records
- ✓ Asking Questions | Listening to Answers
- ✓ Identifying Problems
- ✓ Proposing Solutions



Adapted from Wrights Law: www.wrightslaw.com

Overview of Advocacy Skills

Gather Information

Advocates gather facts and organize documents to learn about a child's disability and educational history. Advocates use facts and independent documentation to resolve disagreements and disputes with the school.

Learn the Rules of the Game

Advocates educate themselves about their local school district. They know how decisions are made and by whom. Advocates know about legal rights of both parents and children. They also know which words to avoid. *For example, a child with a disability is entitled to an "appropriate" education, not the "best" education.*

Plan and Prepare

Advocates know that planning prevents problems. Advocates do not assume that school personnel will tell them about rights and responsibilities. Preparing for meetings, creating agendas, writing objectives, and using meeting worksheets and follow-up letters to clarify problems are all tools in an advocate's tool belt.

Keep Written Records

Because documents are often the keys to success, advocates keep written documentation. They know that if a statement is not written down, it "was not said". They make requests in writing and write polite follow-up letters to document events, discussions, and meetings.

Ask Questions | Listen to Answers

Advocates are not afraid to ask questions. When they ask questions, they listen carefully to answers. "Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How" are critical questions.

Identify Problems

Advocates learn to define and describe problems from all angles. They use their knowledge of interests, fears, and positions to develop strategies. They do not waste valuable time and energy looking for people to blame.

Propose Solutions

Advocates know that parents negotiate with schools for special education services. As negotiators, advocates discuss issues and make offers or proposals. They seek "win-win" solutions that will satisfy parents and schools.



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