

Effective Parent Advocacy

Working with Your Child's IEP Team



Matrix Parent Network

We **empower** families of children with special needs to successfully understand and access the systems that serve them.

We want **you** to become successful advocates and role models for your children.



Who Are We?



Introductions

You Will Leave Here Knowing:

- What is an advocate?
- What are the skills and strategies needed to be an effective parent advocate?
- Techniques to use before, during, and after your next IEP, whether it is in-person or virtual.
- Why collaboration is **THE KEY** to successful advocacy at all times.



What is an Advocate?

An Advocate is someone who pleads the cause of another or promotes the interests of a cause or group.

You advocate every day!

Have you ever:

- Met with your child's teacher about any issue?
- Questioned a medical professional on issues concerning yourself or your child?

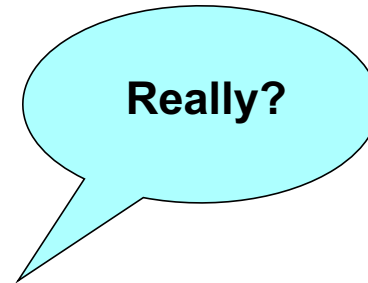
If you have done these things, you already are an *Advocate*

What is your Biggest Challenge Right Now?



TURN

&



TALK

Skills & Strategies



Skills & Strategies

1. Use your understanding of your child.
2. Learn about the systems and key players.
3. Stay current on special education as schools reopen.
4. Try to stay organized.
5. Clear and compassionate communication is important.
6. Recognize perspective (yours and others).
7. Solve problems creatively to resolve disagreements.
8. Practice self-care.



Skills and Strategies 1: Use Your Understanding of Your Child

**You know your
child best!**



Use Your Understanding of Your Child

Your experiences are valuable and may be used to improve things – but only if you share with your team:

- You know when something is or isn't working.
- You have ideas about how to make things better.

If you can, observe, learn and communicate:

- How does the disability affect various aspects of life?
- How does the disability manifest itself in your own child?

Use Your Understanding of Your Child

If your child experienced distance learning (maybe still is):

- Did you keep a journal of what was working and what wasn't working?
- Did you take videos of your child learning to illustrate what was working and what wasn't working?
- Share your observations and thoughts with teachers and the IEP team.
- Your observations of your child's progress toward goals may help with receiving services to remediate learning losses due to change of service delivery during COVID-19.

Use Your Understanding of Your Child



Your observations are important!

- You can help teachers understand how well your student has “accessed the curriculum” by sharing observations and recordings of at-home learning: how well they understand instructions; how successful they are at completing homework independently.
- The examples on the next two slides show the kinds of observations you might record. Here’s the [Daily/Weekly Observation Guide](#)
- If you have concerns about a particular IEP goal your child is working on, talk with the teacher to get specifics about how progress on that goal is being monitored.

Daily (or weekly) Observation Log: Homework/Distance learning observations:

Date: Tues, Sept. 15

Online class: Was Sam able to sit and focus on the class being delivered on line? ☒ Yes/☐ No

If Yes, how long did Sam focus on the class? 10 minute of a 40 minute class

How many times did I have to redirect him during the class? (Tell him to focus, tell him to sit down, point to the screen, etc.) 8 times.

Did Sam interact with the teacher or other classmates? ☒ Yes/☐ No

If so, how? Asked questions? Answered questions? Made suggestions? Joked with classmates?

Sam attempted to get other students' attention by making faces and gesturing.

Was Sam able to complete classwork or homework independently? Yes/☒ No

Did Sam understand the class work or homework he was being given? Yes/☒ No

If no, check one:

☐ I had to spend a few minutes reviewing the directions with him

☐ I had to read and explain the directions

☒ I had to completely review the concepts needed to do the work

Did Sam complete the class work/homework assignment? Yes/☒ No

If yes, how long did it take: _____ minutes

If no,

Estimate what percent of the work was done: 30 %

How long did Sam work to attempt his homework? 20 minutes

Other observations

Sam threw down his books and broke his pencil when asked to start his assignment. After 15 minutes of cajoling, and reminding him he could go outside afterwards, he agreed to do the work if I sat with him. After he got started, he seemed to enjoy the word search worksheets and was proud of how many words he could recognize.

Daily (or weekly) Observation Log: Homework/Distance learning observations:

Date: Tues, Sept. 15

On line class: Was Suzi able to sit and focus on the class being delivered on line? ☒ Yes/☐ No

If Yes, how long did Suzi focus on the class? 30 minute of a 40 minute class

How many times did I have to redirect her during the class? 2 times.

Did Suzi interact with the teacher or other classmates? Yes/☒ No

If so, how? Asked questions? Answered questions? Made suggestions? Joked with classmates?

Suzi refused to speak when the teacher called on her.

Was Suzi able to complete classwork or homework independently? Yes/☒ No

Did Suzi understand the class work or homework she was being given? Yes/☒ No

If no, check one:

☐ I had to spend a few minutes reviewing the directions with her.

☒ I had to read and explain the directions.

☐ I had to completely review the concepts needed to do the work.

Did Suzi complete the class work/homework assignment? Yes/☒ No

If yes, how long did it take: 90 minutes

If no,

Estimate what percent of the work was done: _____ %

How long did Suzi work to attempt her homework? _____ minutes

Other observations:

Suzi broke down in tears three time while working on her class assignment, however, she refused to take a break and kept working even though she seemed quite agitated and upset about it.



USING AN ACTIVITY MATRIX TO INFUSE IEP GOALS THROUGHOUT THE DAY



- 1) List the student's goal areas along the top of the matrix
- 2) List the daily schedule of activities along the left side of the matrix, including all routines throughout the day (lunch, etc.)
- 3) In each corresponding cell write how the student will be taught and/or practice each skill during the daily activities and which EBP for ASD will be used

DAILY ACTIVITY:	Goal Area: Academics	Goal Area: Communication	Goal Area: Social Skills	Goal Area: Independence	Goal Area: Fine Motor
REVIEW DAILY SCHEDULE 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	Reading: Reads words on schedule Math: Reads times on schedule	Responds to prompt: "Tell me what you want to do today."	Requests help using two-words "Help, please."	Builds order of daily schedule	Uses pincer grasp to put Velcro picture symbols on schedule
READING 9:30 AM – 10:00 AM	Reading: Read a story to student Have student sequence three pictures related to the story	When offered two books and asked, "Which book?" will answer, "I want to read ____."	Takes turns turning the pages Waits until his turn to turn the page	Returns the books to the bookshelf	Uses pincer grasp to open and close book and turn pages
BATHROOM 10:00 AM – 10:15 AM FREE CHOICE 10:15 AM- 10:45 AM	Reading: Follows mini-task schedule for toileting/washing hands	When offered two free choice activities, "Want to take a walk or do iPad" will answer, "I want to ____."	Walk: Take a scavenger walk with sibling/parent and check off items on list iPad: Play a two person game with sibling/parent	Independently completes toileting and handwashing using mini-task schedule	Use pincer grasp to zip and unzip pants Use efficient pencil grasp when making checkmarks on scavenger list while using an adaptive pencil grip, short pencil/crayon, or standard wide Kinder pencil
MATH 10:45 AM – 11:30 AM	TouchMath: Lesson 7	When offered two lesson choices, "Want to do this lesson or this lesson he will answer, "I want to do ____."	Requests help using two-words "Help, please." Or by raising hand Asks for more time saying, "Five more minutes, please"	Sets TimeTimer Quits when TimeTimer ends Shuts down program Checks schedule	Uses pincer grasp to set TimeTime

Use Your Understanding of Your Child

CAPTAIN website is a wealth of information, even if your child experiences another disability.

Check out the padlets for more resources to support transitioning back-to-school – strategies to support students with Autism:

[Transitioning Back to School](#)

[Haciendo la Transición de Regreso a la Escuela](#)



Skills and Strategies 2: Systems and Key Players

Lots to learn!



Systems and Key Players

- School Districts, Directors of Special Education, Program Managers, Principals, Teachers
- Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)

SELPA is a state-mandated consortium that provides for all special education service needs of children living within its boundaries. [SELPAs in our service areas](#)

- Community Advisory Committees

CA Ed Code requires each SELPA to have a Community Advisory Committee for special education - members are both parents and professionals. [CACs in our service areas](#)



Systems and Key Players

- CA Dept of Education: [Stronger Together: A Guidebook for the Safe Reopening of California's Public Schools](#); [Clarifications for Student Learning in Quarantine](#); [Back-to-School Resources](#); [Did You Know?](#); [Coronavirus Response and School Reopening Guidance](#); [Safe Schools for All Hub](#)
- CA Safe Schools for All: [Safe Schools Parent Page](#)
- CA Dept of Public Health: [What Parents Should Know About the Updated COVID-19 School Guidance](#); [Guidance for K-12 Schools in CA](#)



Systems and Key Players

Social Security Administration <https://www.ssa.gov/>



Regional supports:

- [In-Home Support Services](#) – [Find your IHSS county office](#)
- [Regional Centers](#) – we have 6 in our service areas – [Regional Center look-up](#)
- [Matrix Mental Health resources](#)
- County Mental Health & Human Services

Systems and Key Players



- You can reach out to your child's case manager for every agency you interact with.
- You can reach out to the director or decision maker for each organization that supports your child.

We can help educate you on the systems that serve you and your child. Give us a call on our Helpline: 800-578-2592 or browse the information at Matrix

Skills and Strategies 3: Stay Current on Special Education



Stay Current on Special Education

- [Matrix Website](#) and [Matrix Newsletters](#)
- Your school website
- Your SELPA (see links on previous slide)
- [The School & College Legal Services \(SCLS\) updates](#)
- National disability groups ([CHADD](#), [NAMI](#), [Autism Speaks](#), etc.)
- [Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy](#)
- [Disability Rights California \(DRC\)](#); [Special Education Rights and Responsibilities](#)



Stay Current on Special Education



- [AB 130's Impact on Special Education](#) from the Association of CA School Administrators
- CA Dept of Ed Guidance: [Independent Study for 2021-2022](#); [Weekly COVID-19 updates from State Superintendent of Ed](#); Weekly newsletter registration – email to join-covid19-update@mlist.cde.ca.gov; [Overview of Independent Study](#); [Is Independent Study Right for My Student](#)
- INDEPENDENTSTUDY@cde.ca.gov; contact the Special Education Parents Help Line at 1-800-926-0648

Stay Current on Special Education

Can my child with disabilities enroll in and receive services through independent study?



Yes, so long as their Individualized Education Program (IEP) specifically provides for independent study enrollment. If your child has an IEP and would like to enroll in independent study, you should ask the IEP team to get together as soon as possible. Legally, this meeting should occur within 30 days of your request for an IEP meeting. You should discuss whether changing the delivery method of your child's special education placement and services in their IEP to independent study can meet their needs.

- [Distance Learning](#) Available to Families through Independent Study during the 2021-2022 School Year:
A Parents and Guardians

Stay Current on Special Education



Independent Study as the option for distance learning:

- DREDF Special Edition: [Know Your Rights](#): Students with Disabilities and Independent Study Programs
- Ed Source: [Quick Guide](#) to Independent Study in CA
- National Center for Youth Law: [Know Your Rights Guide](#) (long version); [Know Your Rights](#) (short version);
- ACLU of CA: [Distance Learning](#) Available to Families Through Independent Study During the 2021-22 School Year

Stay Current on Special Education



And hot off the press ...

DRC, our sister agency DREDF and the Arc of CA filed a [lawsuit](#) with the US Dept of Justice against CA and other state agencies for violating ADA:

“On September 20, 2021, six families of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities are filing a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice against the State of California and other state agencies for violating the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). These families argue that school districts across the state fail to provide needed accommodations in distance learning for disabled students who require them. Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF) and the Arc of California, both organizations that advocate for people with disabilities, are also complainants. The families and organizations are represented by Disability Rights California (DRC), DREDF, and the law firm of Vanaman German, LLP.”

If you have an interest, check [Disability Rights California](#) , [DREDF](#), [Matrix](#)

Stay Current on Special Education

From [Follow the Funding: An Overview of the 2021 Budget Act and Special Education Funding](#) presentation on August 5, 2021, by Heather Calomese, Division Director, Special Education Division, CA Dept of Ed and Stacey Wedin, Education Administrator, Statewide Policy and Implementation, Special Education Division, CA Dept of Ed

The Budget Act includes:

- \$15 million in support of the Supporting Inclusive Practices project:
<https://www.sipinclusion.org/>
- \$260 million for the Special Education Early Intervention Preschool Grant

Stay Current on Special Education

From [Follow the Funding: An Overview of the 2021 Budget Act and Special Education Funding](#)

The Budget Act includes:

- \$100 million on a one-time basis to SELPAs to support member LEAs in conducting dispute prevention and voluntary alternative dispute resolution (ADR) activities.
- \$300,000 for the CDE to contract with an institution of higher education or nongovernmental organization with expertise in IEP facilitation and ADR in special education in California to develop a model for an IEP facilitation network.



Stay Current on Special Education

From [Follow the Funding: An Overview of the 2021 Budget Act and Special Education Funding](#)



The Budget Act includes:

- \$450 million for allocation to SELPAs and their member LEAs to provide **learning recovery support** to students with disabilities associated with impacts to learning due to COVID-19 school disruptions.
- SELPAs will work with member LEAs to develop and submit a plan to the CDE detailing how the SELPA and member LEAs will implement the requirements associated with this funding.

Stay Current on Special Education

Language Matters

- Compensatory education is not part of IDEA and is awarded by a court when FAPE has been denied.
- Compensatory education is not for regression due to COVID-19.
- Chances are many students have regressed.
- Use the language “*learning loss and remediation under COVID-19*” or “*learning recovery support*” when talking to your IEP team about making up services.



Stay Current on Special Education

Resources on Compensatory Education

[Wrightslaw Website](#)

[Article Pete Wright wrote on compensatory education](#)

[Webinar with 4 attorneys discussing special education](#)

[Pete Wright's slides from above webinar](#)

[How Parents Can Overcome Roadblocks to Compensatory Education](#)



3. Stay Current on Special Education

More from Wrightslaw website

[Wrightslaw Website](#)

[How to Prepare for IEP Meetings, Provide Information and Share Concerns](#)

[How will I know if my child is making progress?](#)

[Check out Wrightslaw's IEP Pop-Up Tool covering present levels, goals and services, measuring progress and providing accommodations](#)



Skills and Strategies 4: Try to Stay Organized

**Emails, more emails,
and zoom meetings!**



Try to Stay Organized

- Keep an IEP binder or folder on your computer for documents, assessments, and important school records.
- If you don't have these documents, ask the school to provide them, even during distance learning.
- Put your questions, concerns and requests in writing (email is ok, but keep your emails).
- Keep a phone log.
- The Matrix IEP Toolkit is on the website.



Skills and Strategies 5: Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

**Do You Hear
Me Now?**



Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important



Remember the 3 Cs:
Communication,
Cooperation,
Collaboration

Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

- Everyone needs to try and be flexible, compassionate and patient.
- Acknowledge and process your emotions.
- Focus on your child's needs *and* your own.
- Show respect and expect it from others.
- Try to avoid making people feel defensive.
- Be grateful and assume your IEP team is doing the best they can!



Talk so schools will listen ... and listen so schools will talk

Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

Tips for Good Communication at a Meeting:

- Set ground rules, these will be different for video conferences.
- Having an agenda can help.
- Clarify time constraints.
- Listen & ask questions.
- Use and ask for facts and data rather than opinions.



Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

Tips for Good Communication at a Meeting:










[Virtual Meetings: Strategies, Tips and Resources](#)

[IEP Meeting Tip Sheets](#)



Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

Virtual IEP Meetings: Technology Tips for All Participants

	Be patient—technology may not work as intended. Assume that everyone is doing their best.
	Test out technology in advance, and make sure all devices are charged.
	Have a back-up plan ready in the event technology issues arise.
	Join the meeting about 10–15 minutes in advance to troubleshoot any technology issues.
	Actively listen and participate in the meeting.
	Set up a meeting space that reduces potential distractions to minimize background noise as much as possible.
	Ensure the security of confidential information before, during, and after the meeting.
	Turn off any notifications on your computer—they may show up on others' screens.
	Use headphones or a headset with built-in microphone, when possible.



Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

Tips for Good Communication at a Meeting:

- Be appreciative, acknowledge the efforts of others.
- Use humor.
- Repeat, reflect and rephrase for clarification.
- Build on small agreements.



Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

Tips for written communication:

Letters or emails should:

- Be sent to person who can make a change
- Focus on only one or two issues
- Be solution vs. blame oriented
- Be no longer than 1 page (less is more!)
- Set a deadline if a reply is requested
- Give your contact information



Skills and Strategies 6: Perspective (Yours and Others)

**It's Nice When We
Acknowledge Each
Other's Thoughts**



Perspective (Yours and Others)

- Acknowledge your fears & concerns as a parent.
- Empathize with the challenges teachers & administrators face – this is an unprecedented time!
- Find common goals & build upon small agreements.
- Don't rehash the past. Focus on what can be done today.
- Keep an open mind.
- Be grateful!



Skills and Strategies 7: Solving Problems Creatively

**Practice
Flexibility!**



Solving Problems Creatively



- Understand the difference between *position* & an *interest*:
 - A fixed position is one way to solve a problem.
 - An interest can be met in several ways.
- Be willing to brainstorm.
- Ask questions to help others to be more specific.
- Call Matrix for help with this.

Solving Problems Creatively



- Focus on what can be done now.
- Document what services your child is getting... or not getting.
- Observe/record whether your child is accessing distance learning.
- To the extent you can, monitor progress; ask for help from teachers/specialists.
- Document your child's progress if distance learning continues; data is important.
- Collaborate/communicate with your IEP team – reach out to them!

Solving Problems Creatively

Tips for Resolving Disagreements:

- Solve disagreements as close to source as possible.
- Communicate your concerns clearly.
- Be calm and factual.
- Document your process.
- Utilize administrative hierarchy.
- Work to preserve good relationships.



Solving Problems Creatively

When you disagree:

- Disagree without being disagreeable.
- Separate the person from the problem.
- Realize no one has all the answers.
- Make sure your facts are correct.
- Choose your battles.
- Call Matrix for help.
- Resolve conflict at the lowest level.



Begin Conflict Resolution at the Lowest Level

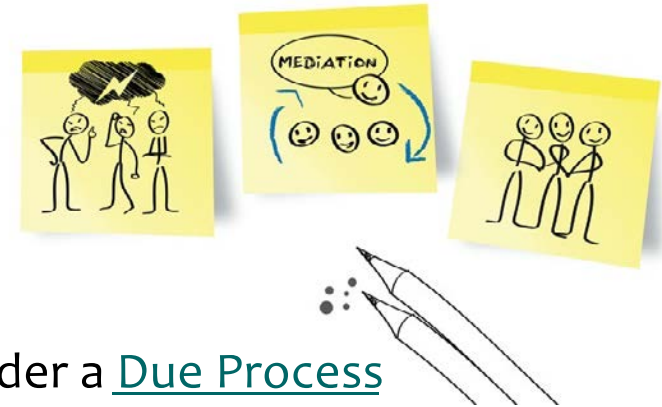
If you're having concerns or issues that effective communication, collaboration, and cooperation are not solving, be ready to climb the conflict resolution ladder.



Educate yourself as to your options: the [Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education](#) is a great place to start

Begin Conflict Resolution at the Lowest Level

- Call Matrix to discuss and strategize
- Connect with teacher, principal, district program manager, special education director
- Call an IEP meeting; consider a facilitated IEP meeting
- Consider Alternative Dispute Resolution or Mediation
- If necessary, file a [State Compliance Complaint](#) or consider a [Due Process Complaint with the Office of Administrative Hearings](#)



Skills and Strategies 8: Practice Self-Care

**Self-Care is
not Selfish!**



Practice Self-Care

- Try to get rest, exercise, and healthy food.
- School is not everything! Consider family harmony and well-being.
- Add enjoyable activities to you and your child's schedules when possible.
- Connect with people who give you encouragement & hope.
- Consider a class in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) or other stress relief approaches.
- Try not to feel guilty!



Practice Self-Care

- Be gentle with yourself.
- Practice asking for help when you need it.
- Try not to not give in to resentment or frustration, but everyone does sometimes.
- Try to make self-care a habit.
- Look for Special Express emails and support groups from Matrix on/about stress reduction.
- We are role models for our children in how we manage stress, growth, and change.



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead





Want to find out what's new in Special Education?

Want to get involved?

Want to make a change?

Consider joining your local school district's
Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

[Find out about CACs in counties we serve](#)

Other ways parents can be involved:

Volunteer opportunities at school: in the classroom, PTA, special ed PTA, attend school site council and school board meetings.



Investigate the [CA Special Education Advisory Commission](#)
and the
[CA State Department of Education Board](#)

Lead by example and encourage your child to get involved!

The Gift of Self-Advocacy

“Nothing About Us Without Us”

- James Charlton

“Expresses the conviction of people with disabilities that they know what is best for them”

Short videos:

[Self-Advocacy: Find the Captain in You!](#)

[10 Self-Advocacy Tips - for Youth by Youth](#)

[I'm Determined \(VA Dept of Ed\)](#)

[CADRE Student-Led IEPS \(from DC\)](#)

[Whose Future Is It Anyway?](#)

[CADRE Self-Determination Series](#)

[Parent Center Hb Self-Advocacy](#)

[Dude, Where's My Transition Plan](#)

[Understood.org: Self-Awareness Worksheets](#)

[Understood.org: Self-Awareness Resources](#)

[Learn with Two Rivers Student-Led IEPs](#)



Collaboration = Success



Collaboration = Success

- Parents & professionals should be partners.
- Maintain good relationships.
- Work together.
- Share goals.
- Recognize that roles sometimes change.
- Draw on everyone's different skills and strengths.
- Solve problems together.



Apply what you've learned



TURN

&



TALK

Skills Checklist

What have you learned?

- Is there a skill you hope to improve?
- Do you need more resources?
- Do you need more support?

What did you think about this presentation?



Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center

Federal Parent Training & Information Center

designated by the ***Office of Special Education, US Department of Education***
serving families of children birth through 26 in
Alpine, Amador, Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Lake, Lassen, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Napa,
Shasta, Sonoma, Solano, Sutter, Tehama, Yolo and Yuba counties

California Family Resource Center

designated by ***CA Department of Developmental Services***,
serving families of infants and toddlers in Marin, Sonoma and Solano

California Family Empowerment Center

designated by ***CA Department of Education***
serving the underserved in Napa, Solano and Sonoma Counties



Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center

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Matrix is grateful for the Federal and State funding it receives, but it's not enough. We rely on other grants and on donations from people like you!

Help Us Help You: Donate



Q & A

**The ability to ask
the right question
is the single most
important skill!**

