

Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy





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Advocates speak up for themselves or others to make things better.

- Your experiences are valuable and can be used to improve things
- You know when something is or isn't working
- You have ideas how to make things better
- You have the only long-term connection to this child

What is Advocacy?

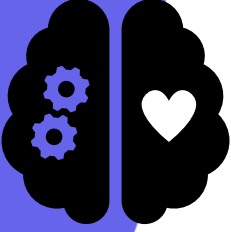
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Advocacy is a Set of Skills to Learn


1	2	3	4	5	6
Understand your child's disability	Know the key players	Know your rights and responsibilities	Be organized	Use clear and effective communication	Know how to resolve disagreements




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**Skill #1
Understand Your
Child's Disability**



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Understanding Your Child's Disability

Learn more about your child's disability

- Disability-specific organizations
- Books & reputable websites
- Parent groups
- Write down your questions for professionals





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Understanding Your Child's Disability

Know what your child's needs are based on their disability

- Share your knowledge with the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team
- Communicate your child's strengths and what helps your child learn






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Understanding Your Child's Disability

Establish high expectations



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Understanding Your Child's Disability

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Assistive Technology (AT)



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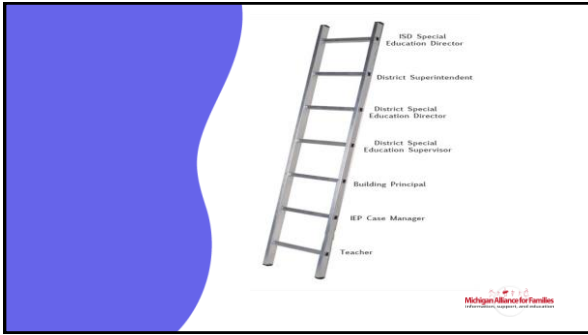
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Skill #2
Know the Key Players

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School: Knowing the Key Players

- Decision Makers/Supervisors
- Contact Information
 - School District
 - ISD/RESA
 - Supervisor
 - Phone number and email
- Best means of communication for you? Best means of communication for staff?

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
Early On®: Knowing the Key Players

- Contact Information: Name, Email, Phone Number
 - Early On Coordinator
 - Service Coordinator
 - Service Providers
- Early On services may be provided by several agencies/organizations
- Best means of communication for you? Best means of communication for staff?

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Community: Knowing the Key Players

	Other Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer PTA / PTO Teacher Appreciation
	School Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretary Bus Driver Lunch room
	Students / Peers	

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Skill #3 Know Your Rights and Responsibilities

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Know Your Rights and Responsibilities:

Procedural Safeguards

Examples:

- Have your child and family **information protected**
- **Consent to or decline** services
- **Review records**
- Help **resolve disagreements**
- Submit a **complaint**



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Know Your Rights and Responsibilities




- Ask questions
- Ask to see the district's policy & special education law
- Students with Disabilities: An Advocates Guide





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#4. Being Organized




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Use what works for you

- Record Keeping**
 - IEP / IFSP – current and previous
 - Progress Reports
 - Evaluations
- Log Notebook**
 - Meeting notes
 - Casual conversations
 - Phone call notes
- Emails and Text**
 - Separate email or email folders
 - Documenting informal conversations
 - Keeping text messages



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Skill #5: Use Clear & Effective Communication



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When you're talking...

-  Stay focused on your child and their needs
-  Have concerns and questions written down beforehand as a reminder
-  Have someone with you who can help you stay on track. Don't go alone.
-  Direct concerns to the person who can best address the issue
-  Restate your concerns if you feel you weren't heard the first time



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When others are talking...


- Listen - is the speaker expressing opinions or is data being shared?
- Take notes
- Wait to ask questions
- Ask clarifying questions or restate what you heard to confirm understanding
- Summarize action steps and confirm timeframe



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Use an action plan


Concern	✓	Action	Who is Responsible	Next Update



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When to put it in writing

- Making a request
- Asking for clarification
- Clarifying what you want to say
- Asking for a decision
- Documenting a verbal discussion




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Tips for Written Communication


- Send to the person who can make the change
- Focus on one or two issues
- Limit length - be brief
- Set a deadline if you expect a response
- Include the date, your name, and contact info
- Keep a copy



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#6. Know how to resolve disagreements



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Options for Resolving Disagreements

- Informal Meeting
- Facilitated Meeting
- Mediation
- State Complaint
- Due Process Complaint/Hearing




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Advocacy is a Set of Skills to Learn

- 1 Understand your child's disability
- 2 Know the key players
- 3 Know your rights and responsibilities
- 4 Be organized
- 5 Use clear and effective communication
- 6 Know how to resolve disagreements



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Michigan Alliance for Families is an IDEA Grant Funded Initiative of the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education, and Michigan's federal Parent-Training and Information Center (PTIC) funded by U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

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