Advocacy Into Action in the Education System

Presented by Dara Wilson, ACMH PAC Member
Together we will...

- Define and Recognize the Importance of Advocating at School

- Review the Importance of Communicating Effectively with School Staff

- Discuss Building Up and Strengthening Advocacy

- Share Community Resources
What is an Advocate?

**Noun**
- one who defends or maintains a cause or proposal
- a person who argues for the cause of another especially in a court of law
- a person who argues for, recommends, or supports a cause or policy
 Verb
- To Speak in Favor of
- To Argue for
- To Act as an Advocate
- To Represent

How Do You Advocate?

Merriam-Webster Dictionary Meaning
Synonyms for Advocate

Familiar Terms

- Uphold
- Lobby
- Champion
- Support
- Assist
- Back
- Voice
- Defend
- Fight
What an Advocate Does is Important!

-Speaks on Behalf of Others or a Cause
-Knowledgeable of the Individual or Cause, has Experience
-Promotes, Protects, Supports
-The Voice of the Voiceless
- Parents know their Children best and can be their best Advocates
- Parent information is essential
- Communicate the Needs of the Student
- Parents Participate as a Team Member with School Staff
- Parents want to Protect and Ensure Equity
- Wants what’s Best for the Child Academically
Mrs. Fowler

Let’s Talk and Build a Relationship
Ensure Lines of Communication are Open

- Establish and Maintain Positive Parent/Staff Relationship

- Current Parent/Staff Contact Information in Multiple Forms (Email, Cell, Text, Mail)

- Agreed Method/Frequency of Communication
Get Organized

- Folder, File Box, Binder
- Put all request and Correspondence in Writing, recap Verbal Conversations
- Create a Contact Log, include names, dates, and comments
- Ask for Documentation of Incidents (Suspensions, Early Pick Up, Report Cards)
- Know your Rights (School Records, IEP, 504, Code of Conduct)
Advocating and Communicating Effectively

Organize your Thoughts

Lead with your Questions

- WHAT IS THE QUESTION/CONCERN?
- WHO ARE THE TEAM MEMBERS?
- What are Possible Solutions/Results?
- Who will Carry it Out?/When?
- What will solutions look like?
- Where is the Plan to Document?
  (Behavior, IEP, 504)
- How will we Follow Up/Monitor Progress?
Request to Meet in Writing!

- Make sure you send to Relevant Staff
- Have your Notes/Questions Written Out
- Take Someone with you
- Focus on no more than 2 issues
- Remember to Share Pertinent Information
- State Your Expectations
WHAT IF PARENT/STAFF DISAGREE?

- Disagree but offer Suggestions
- Know the Complaint Process/Forms
- Follow Chain of Command
- Discuss Possible Resolutions
WHAT IF PARENT/STAFF DISAGREE?

- Respectable Communication/Language
  - Use “I” Statements
- Be as Factual as Possible
- Stay Focused on the Issue
WHAT IF PARENT/STAFF DISAGREE?

- Reconvene if Meeting is too heated

- Continue to try to Resolve

- Use Mediation or Facilitation

- Use Formal Complaint Processes for Special Education
Building & Supporting Strong Advocates

Advocacy Training, Networking, and Learning Opportunities

- Community Organizations
- School District (PAC) Parent Advisory Committees
- County PAC

-(PTO) Parent-Teacher Organization

- Grant-Funded Parent Training Information Center (Michigan Alliance For Families)
Upcoming Events

Special Education Advocacy Summit
December 1st-3rd, 2022 | Detroit, MI

Improving access to educational opportunities and raising expectations for students with disabilities

Presented By

MiPAAC + Wrightslaw

Pre-summit Meet & Greet
Meet and network with other Special Education Advocacy Summit attendees!
Thursday, December 1st | 6:00pm - 8:00pm | Detroit Marriott Southfield

Wrightslaw Special Education Law & Advocacy Training
Friday, December 2nd | 9:00am - 4:30pm | Marygrove Conservancy

Putting Your Advocacy into Action! Interactive Sessions.
Take what you’ve learned from the Wrightslaw training and apply it to specific advocacy issues.
Saturday, December 3rd | 9:00am - 3:00pm | Marygrove Conservancy

Register at mipaac.org/summit

Michigan Alliance for Families - Building Parent Leadership Skills in Early Childhood
Four Tuesdays, 7PM - 8PM
November 15
November 22
November 29
December 6


Michigan Family to Family
https://f2fmichigan.org/whats-we-do/trainings

Growing as a Leader - Leadership Series
Resources

PACs, Roles of Parent Advisory Committees.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NvcEgLbzys

The county Intermediate School District is Wayne RESA. They also have a PAC.

https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/special-education/parent-advisory-committee

Family Matters-Advocating for Your Child Fact Sheet

https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/specialeducation/familymatters/FM1/Advocacy_FactSheet.pdf?rev=a0181367eb474a7d871601dd81605756

Pacer Center-Use Questions to Find Answers: A guide for parents of children receiving special education services


Top 10 Tips: Ideas to Improve Parent-toProfessional Communication from PACER Parent Advocates


Transition into Adulthood:

Organizations

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE: Dial 988
https://988lifeline.org/

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services - Mental Health Services
https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/keep-mi-healthy/mentalhealth/mentalhealth

Association For Children’s Mental Health:
https://www.acmh-mi.org/

Michigan Alliance For Families
www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org

Autism Alliance
www.aaomi.org

Michigan Parent, Advocate, and Attorney Coalition
https://mipaac.org
Organizations

**RAISE Center**

National Children’s Mental Health Family Guide:


**Center for Parent Information and Resources**

[https://www.parentcenterhub.org/](https://www.parentcenterhub.org/)

**Michigan Family to Family Health Information Center**

[https://f2fmichigan.org/what-we-do/trainings/](https://f2fmichigan.org/what-we-do/trainings/)

Growing as a Leader – Leadership Series

**Michigan Council For Exceptional Children**

[https://michigancec.org/](https://michigancec.org/)

**MICEC Division of Early Childhood(DEC)**

Thank You!

Dara Wilson - ACMH PAC Parent