

What to do if you feel that your student is not getting what they are entitled to...

Educate yourself on IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act- Students with disabilities that adversely affect educational performance may be found eligible for IDEA. Students with disabilities that may or may not affect educational performance may be eligible for Section 504 services. If a child has a disability that impairs one or more “major life activities,” (walking, breathing, hearing, speaking, reading, writing, etc.) they may be eligible for services under section 504. If you need more information on this, refer to the reference page for websites with more information.

Establish a good relationship with the student’s teacher and staff members at the student’s school. Attend parent teacher nights, volunteer, ask questions when you have them. These are all ways to establish good rapport with the people that interact with your child on a daily basis. Feel free to voice concerns; it helps to do it in a way that is goal-directed and acknowledges common interests and value of good outcomes.

Remember that you and your child are important members of the IEP team!

As a parent, you have information that no one else on the IEP team has. You know your child’s entire history and background, and you know what motivates him or her in settings outside of school. When you interact with teachers and attend IEP meetings, do your homework beforehand and participate as much as possible. Keep what is best for your child in mind. Respect the training and knowledge that other members of the team have, but don’t feel that you have to agree with others ideas just to get along. Encourage your child to speak up in meetings as well. You want to encourage him or her to ultimately become his or her own best advocate –it’s a skill that lasts a lifetime!

If you have a problem or disagree with something that is a part of your student’s placement, speak up!

If you have established a good relationship from the beginning of the school year, you will hopefully feel comfortable bringing any issues up with your student’s teacher. This good relationship will hopefully also help the teacher to realize that your concerns are valid and important. Discuss any concerns with the student’s teacher and other members of the IEP team. Request a meeting if appropriate.

If a problem persists that cannot be solved informally, take steps to resolve it formally.

This is where mediation and due process come in. If you are found to be in the right after a due process hearing, attorney’s fees can be paid for you. A good starting place if you are considering taking this step, or to learn more about special education, is the Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania. For more information, go to the DRN’s website at www.drnpa.org or contact their intake department 1-800-692-7443.