

Advocating for Your Special Needs Child Workbook



Learning to Advocate from the Beginning

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to:

- * Express their views and concerns
- * Access information and services
- * Defend and promote their rights and responsibilities
 - * Explore choices and options

Remember it is important to have a plan for advocacy!

How do you intend to advocate for your child?

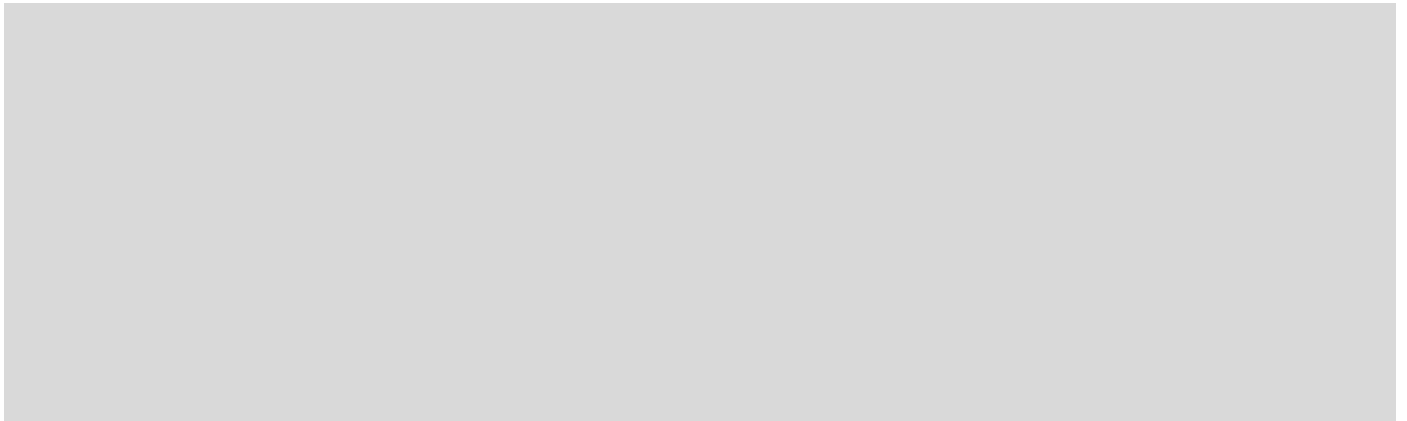
List the steps that you will take towards advocacy.

Get your team in order!

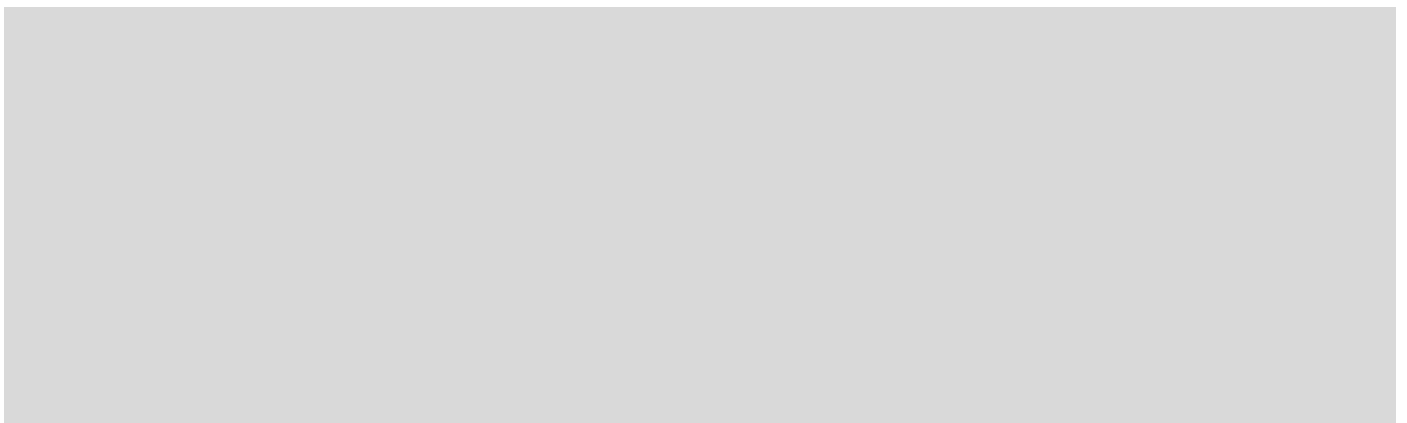
You need to have a support team behind you (i.e., spouse, friend, family member, advocate, attorney).

Equally important is knowing your IEP team members.

List here who is a part of your child's IEP team.



What questions do you have for your team members?



Communication

There are four types of communication styles:

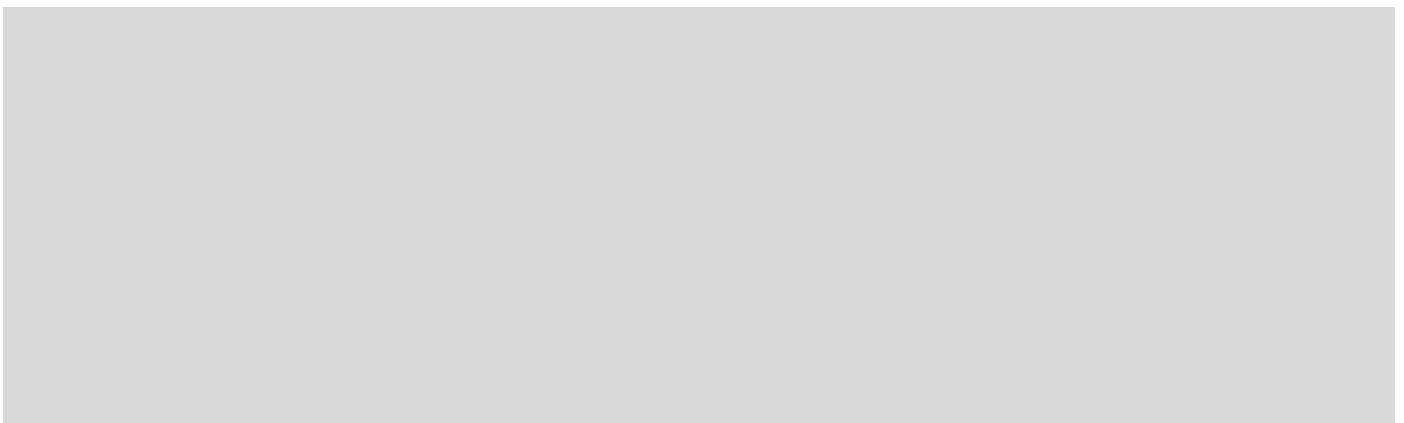
Passive communication - avoids expressing opinions or feelings, protecting one's rights, and identifying or meeting one's needs

Aggressive communication - tends to violate the rights of others

Passive-aggressive communication - uses a communication style in which the individual appears passive on the surface, but is really acting out anger in a subtle, indirect, or behind-the-scenes way

Assertive communication - clearly states one's opinions and feelings, and firmly advocates for his or her rights and needs without violating the rights of others

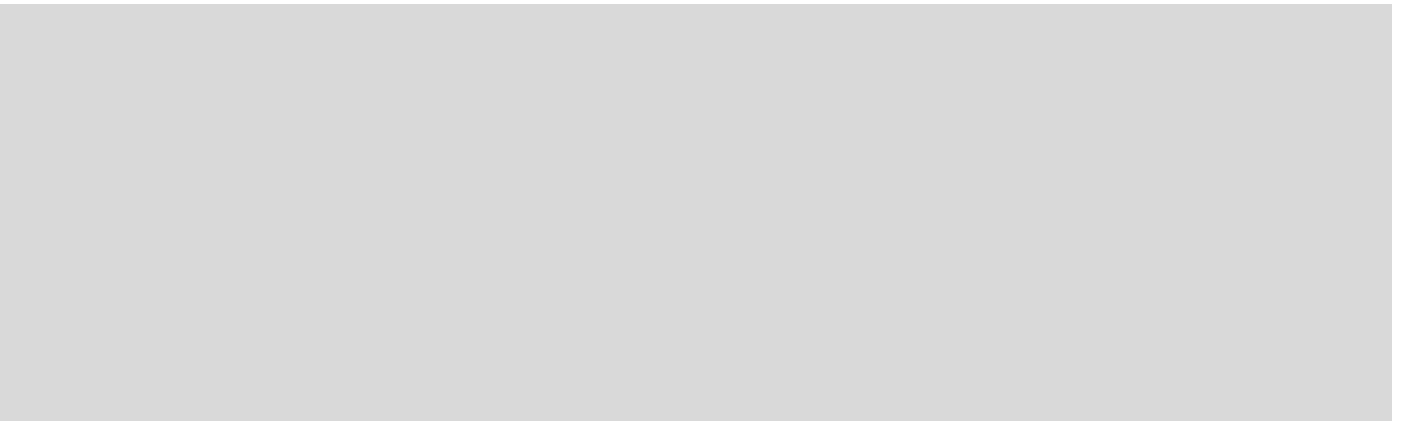
What is your communication style? What strengths do you have?



What communication skills do you need to work on?



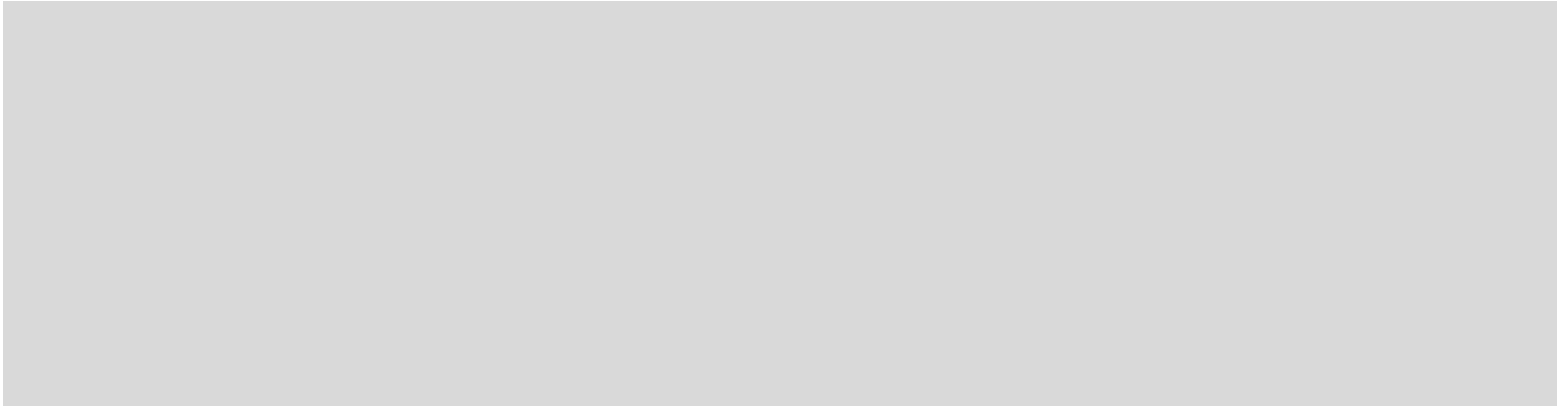
Be prepared ahead of time!
What questions do you have for the IEP team?



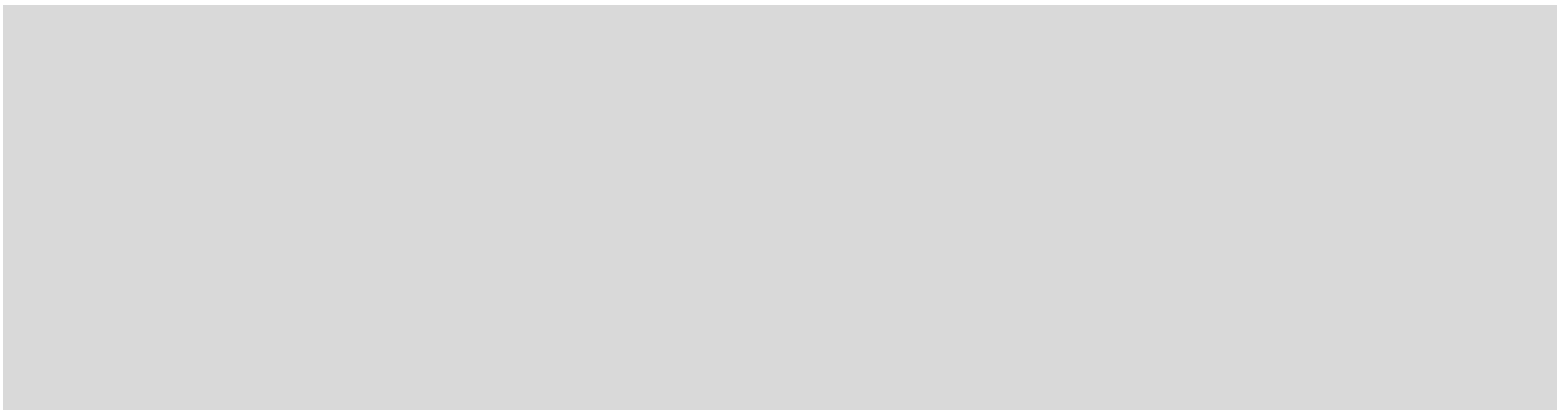
Evaluations and Referrals

Has your child been evaluated? Use your child's evaluation report to answer the following questions.

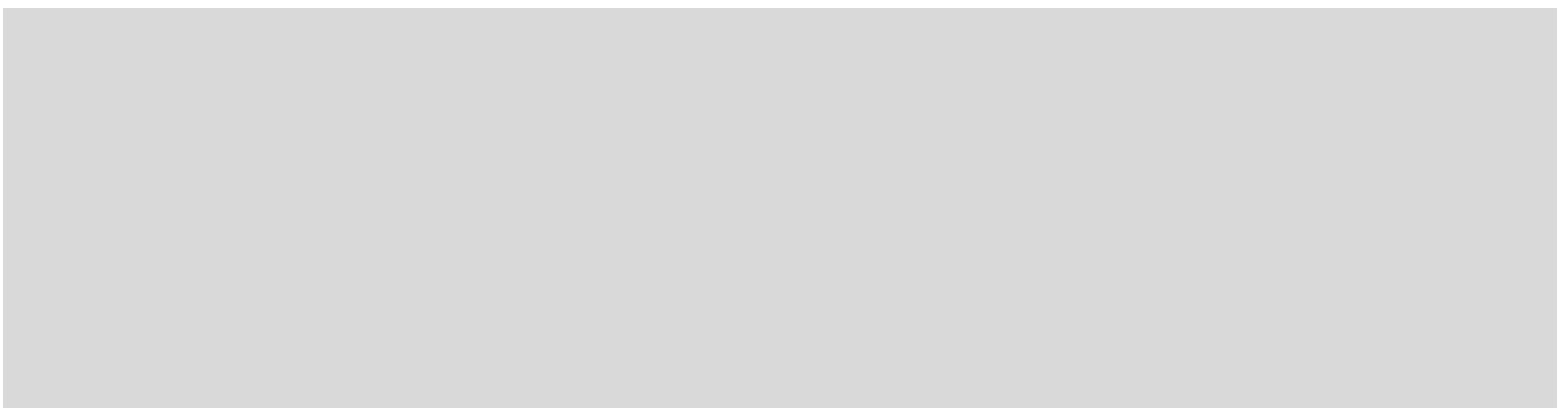
What assessments were used? (*cognitive, adaptive and behavior assessments will be listed in the report with an explanation of what each assessment found*)



What was recommended by the school psychologist or educational diagnostician? (*this is usually found at the end of the report*)



Do you agree with the evaluation? What questions do you have?



Know the Special Education Process!

If you do not know, you will not know what steps to take.

List the steps of the special education process.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

Answers: 1. child is showing difficulties or delays, 2. evaluation conducted, 3. eligibility/IEP meeting scheduled, 4. eligibility is determined at meeting, 5. IEP is developed, 6. student is placed and services begin, 7. student will receive an annual IEP within 1 year, 8. student will be reevaluated within 3 years

Eligibilities, IEPs and 504 plans

The IEP is designed to build upon each component, making each component as important as the previous one. List each section you will find in the IEP.



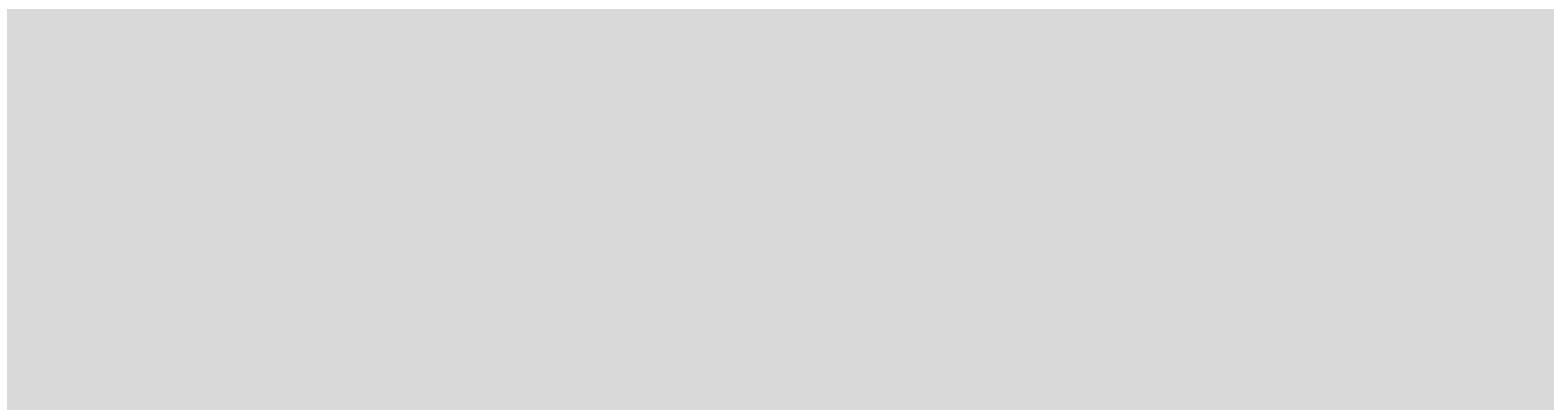
Each state's IEP may look a little different. Check with your state to find the most accurate IEP information.

Answers: present levels of performance, parental concerns, progress report, eligibility, transition planning, goals and objectives, supplementary aides and services, extended school year (ESY), testing accommodations, placement , meeting notes

Know your rights about 504 plans!

- The school must meet your child's needs to the same extent as a child without a disability.
 - An IEP is not required for a 504 plan.
- 504 plans will include accommodations that will adjust or adapt schooling for your child.
- 504 plans may include specialized instruction such as speech therapy and occupational therapy.
- You have the right to be informed about identification, evaluation and classroom placement.
 - You have a right to disagree with the proposed 504 plan.
- You have the right to file a complaint. Always file a lawsuit as your last resort.

What questions do you have about 504 plans?

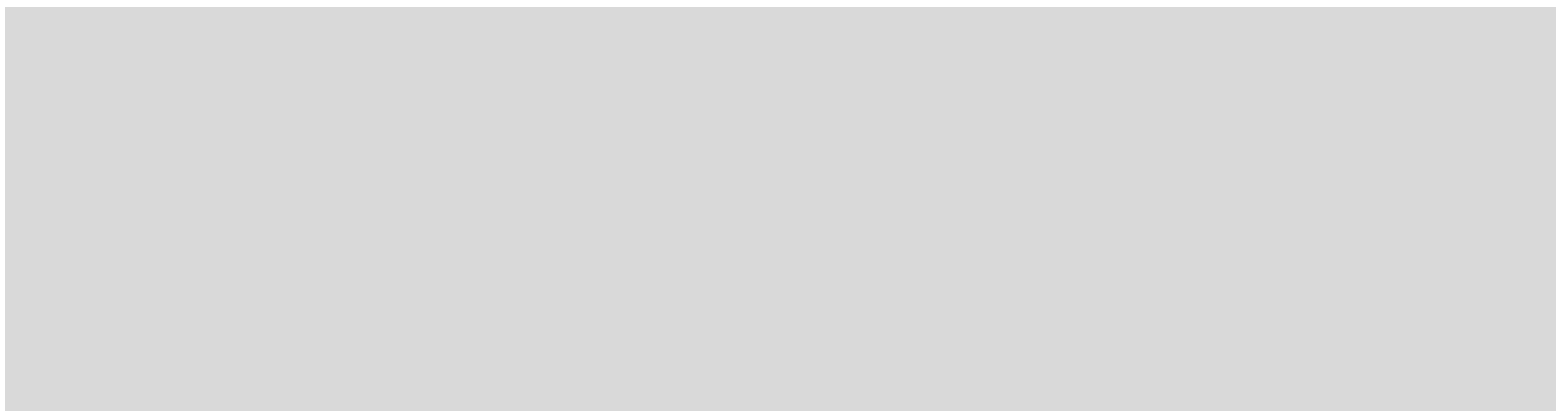


Your Rights and Special Education Law

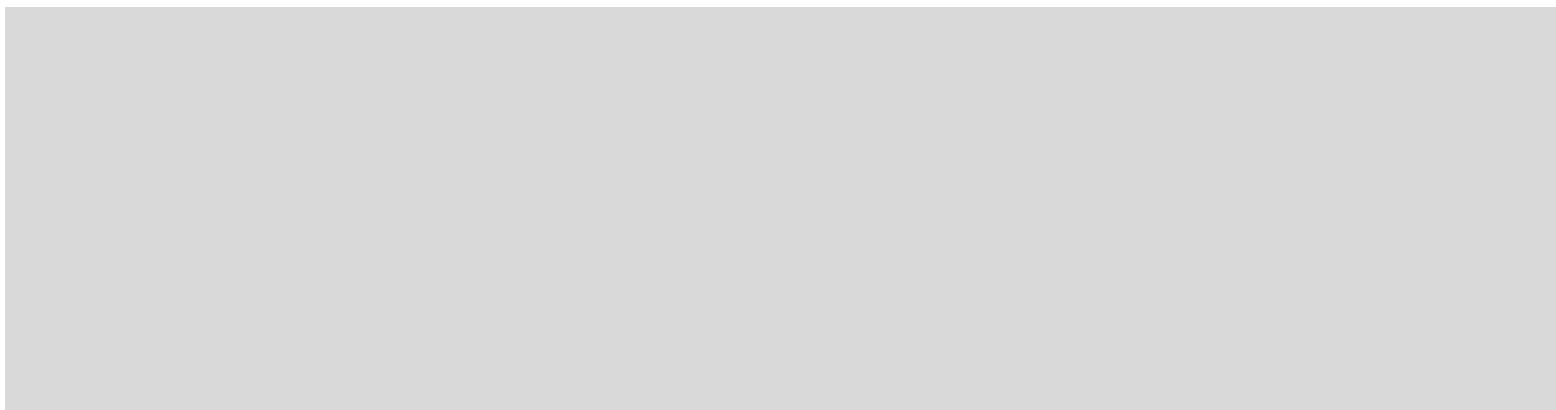
Do you know your rights?

Obtain a copy of your State's Procedural Safeguards. Use your Procedural Safeguards to answer these questions.

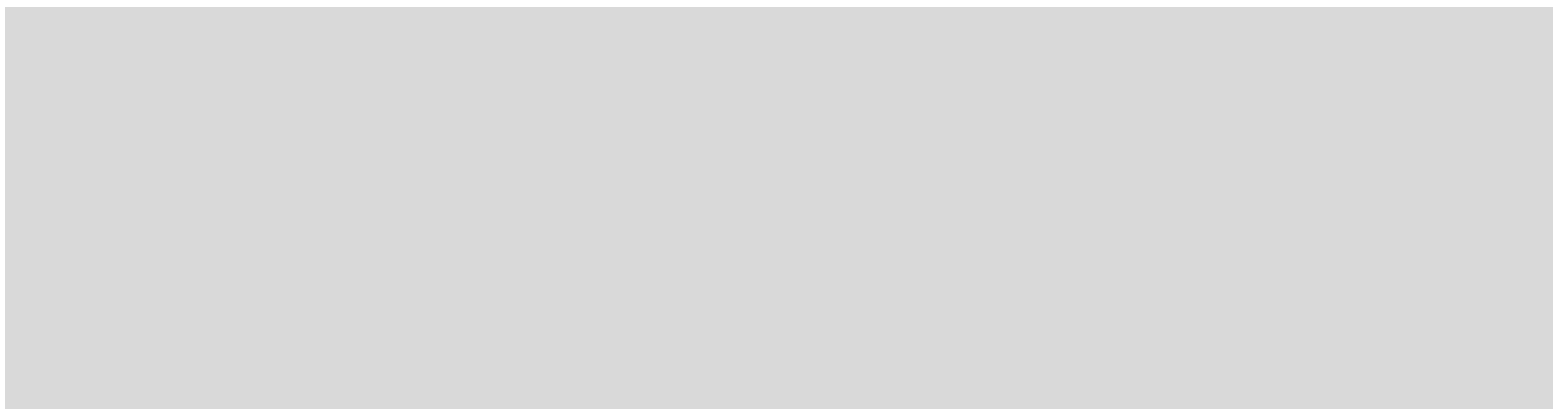
What does your state say about confidentiality?



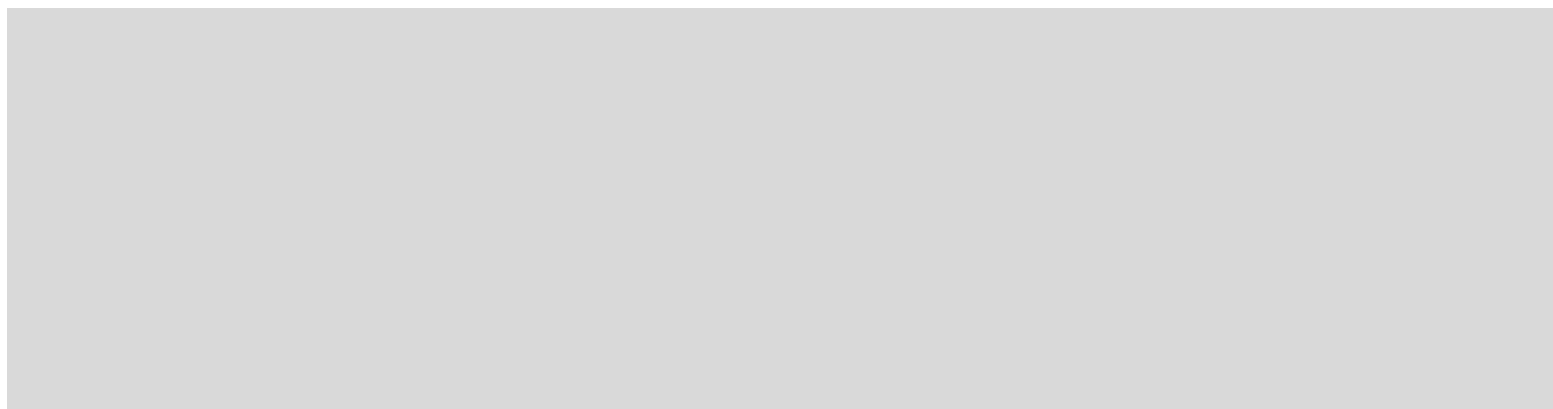
When is the school district required to notify you?



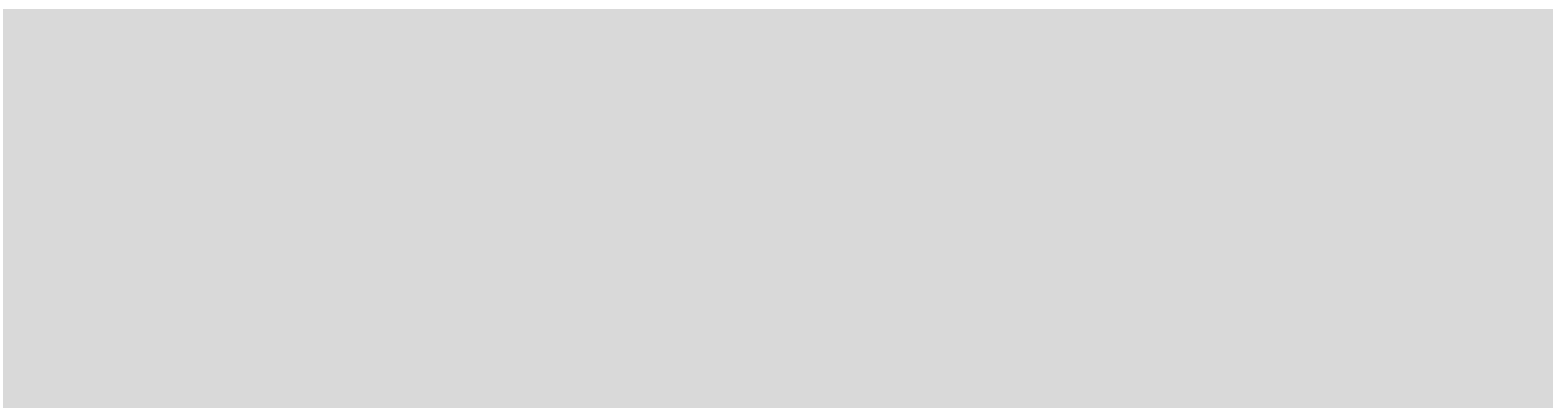
What steps do you take to obtain an Independent Educational Evaluation?



When is your consent needed?



Who do you contact if you are in disagreement with an IEP decision?



Dispute Resolution

Remember you have the right to disagree. If your disagreement is not resolved in the IEP meeting, you have the right to enter into dispute resolution. Dispute resolution should not be taken lightly. This is why it is important that you completely understand the process.

Answer the following questions to review your dispute resolution options.

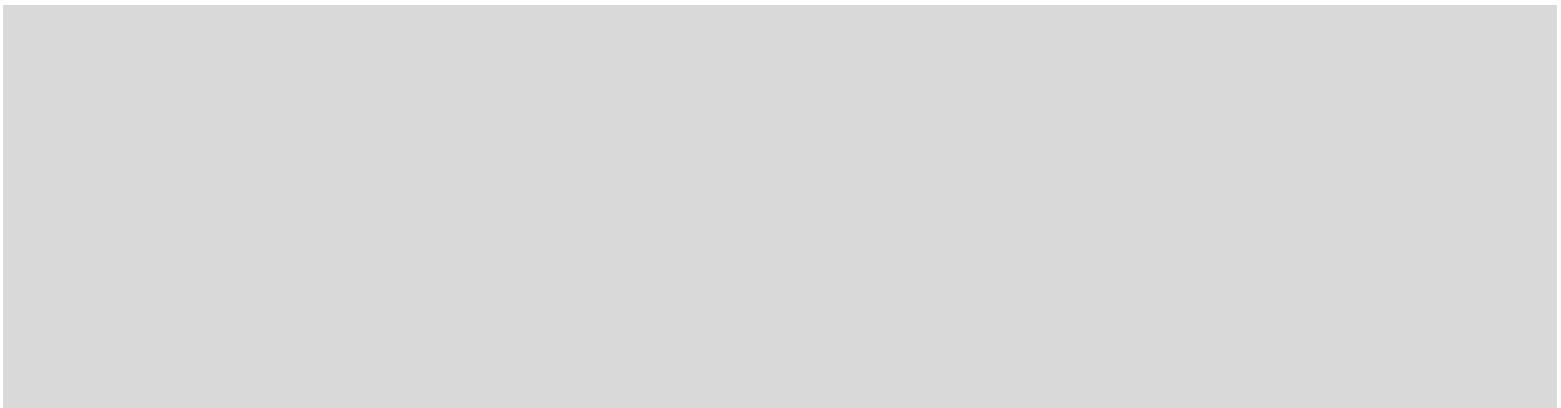
What happens during mediation?

When should you ask for mediation?

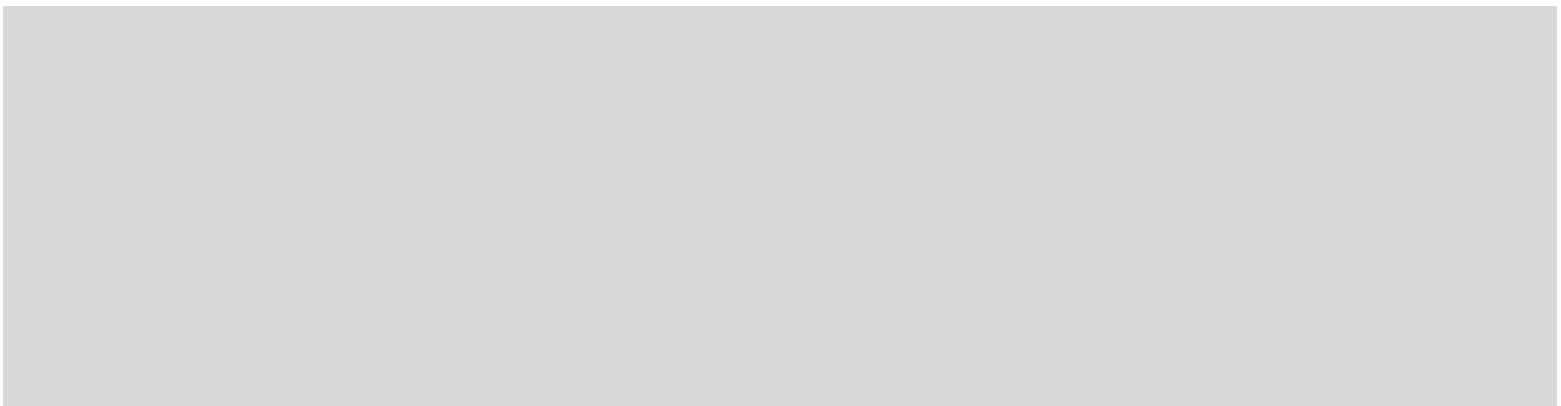
What is the difference between mediation and resolution?



What should be included in the document when you file a complaint?



What is the difference between a due process complaint and a state complaint?



Give yourself a pat on the back! You have just completed your first step towards advocating for your child.

Check out www.beyondspecialeducation.com for other books and resources.

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