

Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy





1

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?

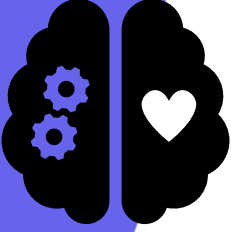
2

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




3



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



4

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





5

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






6

Understanding Your Child's Disability

Establish high expectations



Michigan Alliance for Families
Information, Support, and Advocacy

7

Understanding Your Child's Disability

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Assistive Technology (AT)



Michigan Alliance for Families
Information, Support, and Advocacy

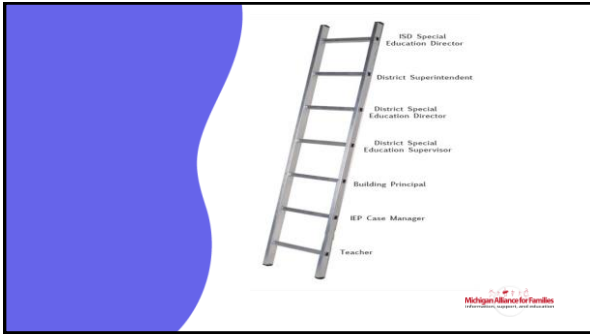
8



Skill #2
Know the Key Players

Michigan Alliance for Families
Information, Support, and Advocacy

9



10

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?

Michigan Alliance for Families
 Information, Support, and Advocacy

11




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?

Michigan Alliance for Families
 Information, Support, and Advocacy

12

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	

Michigan Alliance for Families
Information, Support, and Advocacy

13



**Skill #3
Know Your Rights and Responsibilities**

Michigan Alliance for Families
Information, Support, and Advocacy


14

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**



Michigan Alliance for Families
Information, Support, and Advocacy

15


Know Your Rights and Responsibilities




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





16



#4. Being Organized




17



18

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



19









Skill #5: Use Clear & Effective Communication



20

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



21

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



22

Use an action plan


Concern	✓	Action	Who is Responsible	Next Update



23

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




24

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



25



#6. Know how to resolve disagreements



26

Options for Resolving Disagreements

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




27

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



Michigan Alliance for Families
Education, Support, and Advocacy

We are here to support you!


 @MichiganAllianceForFamilies
 @michiganallianceforfamilies /
 MichiganAlliance



For more information visit:
<https://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org>
 Call: 800-552-4821
 En Español 313-217-1060
 لله العربية 248-963-0607
 Statewide Email: info@michiganallianceforfamilies.org



Michigan Alliance for Families

In collaboration with 

Michigan Alliance for Families is an IDEA Grant Funded Initiative of the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education (MDE-OSE); the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP); and Michigan's Federal Parent-Training and Information Center (PTIC) funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs(OSEP).

www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org
 1-800-552-4821
info@michiganallianceforfamilies.org

