

SEPAC Notes on Visions of Community

March 7, 2015

Federation for Children with Special Needs
Seaport World Trade Center, Boston, MA

Notes taken by Erin Pasternak

Session 1: Parents and Attorneys Working Together to Achieve FAPE

FAPE- Free and Appropriate Public Education *brief definition of FAPE

Presented by: Judith Canty Graves, Carson Graves (parents) and Eileen M. Hagerty, Esq.

Handouts available <http://fcsn.org/conferences/2015/workshops/5handouts.pdf>

- How Advocates can be helpful
 - review and help organize documents
 - help to create a paper trail
 - explain timelines, and state/federal laws
 - help prepare for TEAM meetings
 - can attend TEAM meetings
- What to ask before hiring an Advocate
 - What kind of training/experience do you have?
 - Do you understand my child's disability?
 - Do you have experience working with my school district and/or state agency involved?
 - Note from presenter- if you reach an impasse, you may need to contact an attorney.

Session 1: Parents and Attorneys Working Together to Achieve FAPE

- How can attorneys help
 - able to see strengths/weakness in your case
 - give you an idea of cost
 - should talk to you initially on phone for free
- Hiring an Attorney
 - ask other parents for recommendations
 - personality matters, make sure it's a good match
 - seek out SEPAC presentations by attorneys in local areas
- Questions to ask a potential Attorney
 - How much work do you do in Special Education? (make sure it's a lot)
 - Have you worked with my school district?
 - How do we proceed? Steps to take, timelines
 - Do I have a strong case? If not, why? What can I do to build my case?
 - How do you want my documents organized?
- Role of the Attorney
 - Build a chronological story
 - Identify themes and facts to present in a compelling way

Session 1: Parents and Attorneys Working Together to Achieve FAPE

- Developing a Strategy
 - Mediation is voluntary, BSEA (Bureau of Special Education Appeals) provides
 - SpedEx-both parties need to agree to use this service
 - an expert is selected to review and write report
- Due Process hearing
 - file hearing request, be specific about all of your concerns when writing request
 - not voluntary
 - within 15 days
 - resolution sessions, district can not bring Attorney to resolution if you do not
 - waived
 - Mediation
- Building a Case
 - don't hold back information from attorney
 - independent evaluations are important, for example, neuropsychological evaluation
 - must be current (within 1 year)
 - must be done by a credible professional
 - work with the school
 - can do partial rejection of IEP

Session 1: Parents and Attorneys Working Together to Achieve FAPE

- How parents can prepare
 - Important to remain polite- keep emotions in check
 - *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu (recommended reading by workshop presenters)
 - detailed planning, concentrate on facts
 - request to view your child's records
 - research the credentials of special ed and related service staff (are they qualified to deliver proper service to achieve FAPE)
 - bring a framed picture of child
- Benefits of a settlement
 - can preserve relationship between parents and school system
 - certainty about outcome
 - avoid higher cost of litigation
 - settlement can happen at any point
- Lessons Learned
 - preparation is key, keep a detailed journal about your child in and out of school
 - the Vision Statement on the IEP is very important
 - Be flexible- not all or nothing approach
 - bring concerns to school in writing, for example, an email.

Contacts

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Judith Canty Graves and Carson Graves

[Make Special Education Work](#)

Additional information:

[Mistakes People Make-Parents](#) by Robert K. Crabtree, Esq.

[Mistakes People Make-Advocates](#) by Robert K. Crabtree, Esq.

[Mistakes People Make-Schools](#) by Robert K. Crabtree, Esq.

Session 2: Parent Leadership, Taking the Next Step

Presented by:

Nora Wells, Executive Director, Family Voices

Darla Gundler, Director, EI Parent Leadership Project, MA DPH

Gloria Klaesges, Parent-to-Parent Coordinator, Family TIES of MA at FCSN

An interactive session to explore the Parent Leadership movement.

Handouts available at <http://fcsn.org/conferences/2015/workshops/18handouts.pdf>

Handouts include information on:

- Family TIES Parent-to-Parent program
- MA Family Voices

Session 3: Mental Health in School: Let's Talk About It!

Presented by:

Beth Pond, Family Integration Specialist

Sandy MacLennan, Family Leadership Coordinator

Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PAL)

Handouts available at <http://fcsn.org/conferences/2015/workshops/33handout.pdf>

Handouts include:

- FAPE- What Does It Really Mean?
- Special Education Timelines
- Worksheet to help identify parent concerns
- Free legal resources list
- Information on Youth Advocacy Division
- PPAL- You are Not Alone
- Pocket Police Guide
- List of Commonly Used Terms from Juvenile Law Center

Contacts

Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL)
ppal.net

Helpful guide for parents in crisis:

[Crisis Guide-English](#)

[Crisis Guide-Spanish](#)