

CADRE and JAMS Foundation Present:
Voices from the Field
Interview Clip #4 Transcript – Fran Fletcher

Marshall: So, as you think about your career at the University of Delaware and your years of experience in facilitation and dispute resolution, are there lessons that you've learned that are really, that particularly sing to you?

Fran: You know, there's, there's big ones and there's little ones. A little one, which isn't little, but you can never assume that the people in an IEP, sitting around an IEP table, know each other - because they don't always. There could be a substitute in there. So while you go in there and you pretty much know no one, you need to have them introduce themselves and don't assume that everybody knows each other. But instead of introducing themselves as, 'I'm Sally and I'm the teacher,' you want them to understand, everyone should understand the relationship to the student. So it's great to be able to say, 'I'm John and I'm the speech therapist,' but when I say introduce your relationship, what they usually come back with is, 'oh and I see him three times a week for a half an hour,' and so that kind of frames it for the parent who is already overwhelmed by all the people sitting at the table and can't remember how much time. So I think it kind of just sets the tone a little bit easier. So I think one of the larger things I've learned is that you can't overestimate the importance of an advocate, a parent advocate, at an IEP meeting. I think schools are often put off by the presence of an advocate thinking that they're there to beat 'em up, they're there to make it more difficult, but an advocate who is knowledgeable and experienced, calm and a really good communicator can really make the difference for an entire team, not just the parent.