

CADRE and JAMS Foundation Present:
Voices from the Field
Interview Clip #4 Transcript – Tracy Gershwin Mueller

Tracy: So one of the things that I've come across in my research is looking at - I'm a proactive person - I like to look at how can we prevent these conflicts from even starting? How can just we have these partnerships working the way that we really want them to work and so that we're there for that child? And so in part of my proactive research - I've been trying to look at trends that we might see in terms of when we actually get to this level of litigation or mediation, what is it that's going on here? Are there common disabilities that are being represented? Are there common dispute issues that are being represented? You know? Are we seeing a pattern in program appropriateness or teacher education? I don't know. These are my...you know...we don't know. And so what I've been starting to do is looking at due process hearings that have happened in the past and looking for trends that we might see and so some things that I have come across that's been a bit of a barrier is really having a uniform way of acquiring that data. It's been really hard to access it. And so each state publishes their hearings in different ways and some of them are easier to access than others, but I would encourage state representatives and, and any agencies to really talk to each other and find ways, or at least within their, their local level, or their state level, find ways to consistently report their information. Or find ways, and I'm not saying they're not consistently reporting it, but find ways to perhaps illustrate common themes they might be seeing and then use that data for their own planning strategies for what their districts and state agencies might need. Because, you know, if we're seeing there's a trend a in a certain type of training or education maybe we could use that money that we're really spending on litigation, which we know costs thousands of dollars, and proactively apply that into our systems to use that money to educate teachers on what strategies they might need. So in other words, I think we need to start balancing our check book better. I think we're spending a lot of money and we're not balancing our checkbook. We're not looking, in some cases our bills are hiding under the mattress and we need to make that really explicit so that we can use that data for, for our better. So that instead of, you know, at least use those due process hearings where we ended up spending that money, we can use that to educate ourselves on the change we can make. So that's sort of an area that I'm, I'm starting to look into and, and I'm encouraging people to start balancing their checkbooks.