

ADVOCACY PARTNERSHIPS THAT EMPOWER PARENTS AND PROMOTE EARLY DISPUTE RESOLUTION

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OBJECTIVES

- Collaborative Nature of Utah's Dispute Resolution System
 - Structure of Informal and Formal Dispute Resolution in Utah
 - A Brief History
- Informal Dispute Resolution in Action
 - Parent Advocacy and Empowerment
 - Diversity
 - Current Data and Trends
- Informing and Strengthening the Quality of Services
 - LEA-Level Parent Engagement
 - SEA-Level Collaboration

COLLABORATIVE NATURE OF UTAH'S DISPUTE RESOLUTION SYSTEM

UTAH SPECIAL EDUCATION DISPUTE RESOLUTION OPTIONS



TELEPHONE/EMAIL INTERMEDIARY

- Strategy utilized when parents contact the USBE with concerns about their child's services or questions about dispute resolution options.
- With parent permission, the USBE Dispute Resolution Specialist contacts the LEA's Special Education Director to provide technical assistance.
- Inquiry by parent is viewed as opportunity to clarify the issue, identify informal ways of addressing the matter, leading to resolution in many instances.

PARENT ADVOCATE

- Encourages and helps parents in navigating and resolving disputes
- Facilitates communication with IEP team
- Provides confidential consultations to gain understanding of parents concerns
- Helps parents learn and develop advocacy skills
- Attends school meetings related to concerns with parents, including IEP meetings
- Contracts with several independent contractors and the Utah Parent Center

IEP FACILITATOR

- Neutral
- Not an IEP team member
- Knowledgeable and experienced with the IEP process
- Participates only when invited by both parties
- Ensures that the meeting is student-focused
- Does not make decisions or tell the IEP team how to solve issues
- Does not provide legal advice
- Contracts with several independent contractors (mediators, seasoned administrators, attorneys)

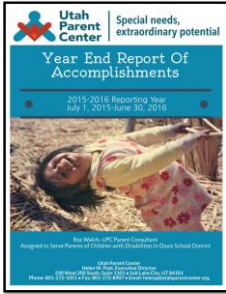
UPC STATEWIDE PARENT SUPPORTS



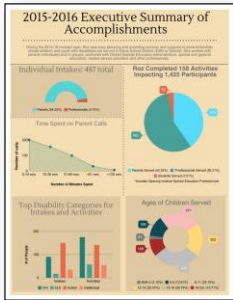
HISTORY OF DISTRICT "PARENT CONSULTANT" MODEL

- Granite School District (2005)
 - Special education climate in the LEA
 - Special funding opportunity
- Early Adopters and LEA Communication
 - Salt Lake School District
 - Davis School District
- Utah Parent Center (UPC) Presence at Special Education Directors' Meeting
 - Natural forum for discussion

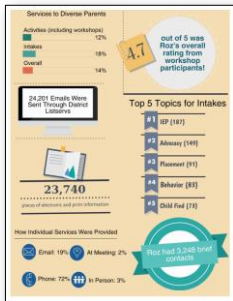
SAMPLE ANNUAL DISTRICT REPORT



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INFORMAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION IN ACTION

PARENT ADVOCATE BROCHURE



PARENT ADVOCACY AND EMPOWERMENT

- In-depth explanation of IEP Process
 - Providing written materials
 - Providing video modules

- Explanation of Dispute Resolution Options
 - Parent brochures and CADRE graphic
 - Importance of using the chain of command

- Document Review
 - Meeting preparation
 - Formulating ideas and questions

PARENT ADVOCACY AND EMPOWERMENT

A Special Note About Communication Strategies

- Making requests in writing
- Documenting team decisions
- Keeping mutual respect going
- Learning special education jargon
- Preparing for meetings

DIVERSITY IN THE LEA

- Example: Refugee Parent from Syria
 - Refugee needs
 - Coordinating multiple services (refugee services, special education services, social services)
 - Barriers in miscommunication
 - Translator spoke the wrong dialect of Arabic
 - Questions and concerns
- Example: Parent with Limited English Proficiency
 - Barriers in miscommunication
 - No interpreting services were provided
 - Parent was treated with disrespect (assumptions about ability)
 - Procedural Safeguards not being followed
 - Parent needed advocacy at the LEA Level
 - Suggested cultural competency training to staff and IEP was rewritten

DIVERSITY IN THE LEA

- Example- Pattern of Need for Interpreters
 - Unique role presented unique opportunity (system-level changes)
 - Shared the issue- Met with the Special Education Coordinator
 - Make suggestions for action

LEA-LEVEL PARENT ENGAGEMENT

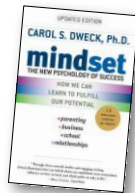
- Parent Liaisons
 - District Level Meetings (Co-sponsored and presented by the LEA and Parent Consultant)
 - Advocacy at the local level
 - Upcoming events
 - Training opportunities
 - Learn the chain of command
 - Updates on relevant special education information
 - Encouraged to meet with the principal and create a dissemination Plan
 - School representative (Granite SD)
 - Regional volunteers (Canyons SD)

LEA-LEVEL PARENT ENGAGEMENT

- Participation on committees
 - All District Consultants serve on LEA Committees
 - Parent Rep. on Committees
 - LRBI/Human Rights Committee
 - Section 504
 - UPIPS Recommendation Teams at LEA Level
 - MTSS Committees
 - Initiatives for improvement
 - Disability-specific committees

STATE-LEVEL COLLABORATION

- State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Activities
 - Book Study – Carol Dweck’s “Mindset”
- Multiple Agency Committees, especially around transition
 - State Transition Action Guide
- Multiple staff on Utah Special Education Advisory Panel (USEAP)



STATE-LEVEL COLLABORATION

- Indicator 8 Parent Survey Revisions
- Utah's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)
 - Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (UMTSS)
 - Meeting Attendance
 - Joint Trainings
 - Developed Materials Together
- Provide Ongoing Data and Input on Parent Concerns Statewide

TAKEAWAYS

- Seek opportunities to make an impact at the local level in addition to larger systems-level work
- Be proactive in building informal dispute resolution options
- Invest in early parent engagement opportunities to reap the benefits of established relationships
- Establish a working relationship with your local Parent Training Information Center (PTI) or Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC) to combine efforts and build synergy

CONTACT INFORMATION

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