



Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.

The Parent Training and Information Center for the District of Columbia

AJE UPDATE

Volume 12, Issue 3 • Knowledge is Power • November 2013

Inside this Edition

Bullying Prevention.....	1
ADHD Support.....	2
Affordable Care Act.....	3
Section 504.....	3
SSI Benefits.....	4

Mission

The mission of AJE is to educate parents, youth, and the community about the laws governing public education, specifically for children with special needs. We seek to empower youth and parents to be effective advocates and youth to self advocate to ensure that children receive an appropriate education. It is also our mission to make the public aware of the consequences of institutional negligence of children with or without disabilities to promote school accountability.

About AJE

AJE is home to the Parent Training and Information Center, DC Parent Information Network, DC Health Information Center, and the DC Parent Center.

V: (202) 678-8060
F: (202) 678-8062
TF: (888) 327-8060
W: www.aje-dc.org
E: information@aje-dc.org

1012 Pennsylvania Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20003
Hours: 9am - 5pm (Mon - Fri)

3912 Georgia Avenue, NW
(Mary's Center)
Washington, DC 20011
Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 9am - 5pm



Third Annual 5K Walk and Roll Against Bullying

Bright and early on September 21, 2013, supporters of Advocates for Justice and Education Inc.'s (AJE) 3rd Annual 5K Walk & Roll Against Bullying gathered at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial to kick-off National Bullying Prevention Month in October. There was a great turnout, with more than 150 parents, youth and community members. Participants as well as volunteers enjoyed Dunkin' Donuts, pictures with McGruff the Crime Dog and speeches from the D.C. Office of Community Affairs, Councilmember

David Grosso, D.C. Office of Disability Rights and the Director of the Miss Amazing Pageant, Jordan Somer. After the race, AJE raffled off giveaways from the Washington Wizards, Washington Redskins, Harris Teeter, Modell's, Ben's Chili Bowl and P.F. Chang's and closed the event with the Preventative Bullying Pledge led by Miss Maryland Outstanding Preteen, Laney Puhalla. AJE sincerely appreciate our monetary and in-kind sponsors; in particular, the most represented school was the Early Childhood

Academy Public Charter School with 32 adults led by Principal Ingraham. Without the help and support of everyone at the event, AJE would not be able to carry out its mission of empowering parents to become more effective educational advocates for their children and to participate fully in the educational and judicial aspect of their child's life. At Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc., we believe in and advocate for an appropriate, inclusive education for all children. We thank the community for its tremendous support of our work.

Supporting a Child with ADHD

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a brain-based disorder that affects many children and adults, regardless of age, race or gender. Parents of children diagnosed with ADHD can help their child overcome daily challenges. Below are some tips for supporting a child diagnosed with ADHD.

Tip 1: Stay Positive

- Keep things in perspective- Remember that your child's behavior is related to a disorder
- Don't sweat the small stuff and be willing to make some compromises- One chore left undone isn't a big deal when your child has completed two others plus the day's homework
- Believe in your child- Trust that your child can learn, change, mature, and succeed
- Seek support- One of the most important things to remember in rearing a child with ADHD is that you don't have to do it alone

Tip 2: Establish structure and stick to it

- Follow a routine. It is important to set a time and a place for everything to help the child understand and meet expectations.
- Use clocks and timers. Consider placing clocks throughout the house, with a big one in your child's bedroom.
- Simplify your child's schedule. It is good to avoid idle time, but a child with ADHD may become more distracted if there are many after-school activities.
- Create a quiet place. Make sure your child has a quiet, private space of his or her own.

- Do your best to be neat and organized. Set up your home in an organized way.

Tip 3: Set clear expectations and rules

- Develop simple and clear rules. Be consistent and stick to the rules.
- Establish expectations and consequences. Consistency is important!
- Display rules and expectations in a place where your child can easily read them. Review the expectations and rules with your child frequently.
- Don't forget praise and positive reinforcement. Be on the lookout for good behavior—and praise it.

Tip 4: Support your child in the school setting

- Plan ahead. You can arrange to speak with school officials or teachers before the school year even begins.
- Create goals together. Discuss your hopes for your child's school success. Together with your child's teachers, write down specific and realistic goals and talk about how they can be reached.
- Share information. You know your child's history, and your child's teacher sees him or her every day: together you have a lot of information that can lead to better understanding of your child's hardships.
- Ask the hard questions and give a complete picture. Communication can only work effectively if it is honest. Share with your child's teacher what tactics work well—and which don't—for your child at home. Find out if your child can get any special services to help with learning.

Information provided by: Melinda Smith, M.A., and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D.

Bullying Prevention Policies in D.C. Schools

Bullying is an important social, health, and education concern facing our youth and local school systems. High-profile news stories have brought increased attention to the link between bullying and violent behavior, suicides, and other serious and long-term consequences. This has led to increased pressure on governments and school systems to more effectively prevent and reduce bullying in schools. Forty-six states have anti-bullying laws and 45 of those laws direct school districts to adopt bullying policies.

Last summer, Mayor Vincent Gray signed into law the Youth Bullying Prevention Act of 2012. The new legislation emphasizes a city-wide approach to preventing and eradicating bullying in the District of Columbia. The law established an Anti-Bullying Task Force made up of District agencies and community advocates charged with researching best practices nation-wide and developing suitable solutions to best serve D.C.'s youth.

The District's anti-bullying law directed all schools and other youth-serving agencies in D.C. to develop bullying prevention policies and submit it to the Task Force for review by

September 14, 2013. The law requires that these policies include, among other things, a common definition of bullying, a statement prohibiting bullying, procedures for reporting and investigating bullying incidents, and an appeal process for persons accused of, or targeted by, bullying, who are not satisfied with the outcome of the initial investigation. These policies must lay out the expected code of conduct and provide a list of the consequences that can result from an identified incident of bullying. Additionally, D.C.'s law requires that each school's bullying prevention policy must include language specifically prohibiting bullying on the basis of the 19 protected traits listed in D.C.'s Human Rights Act

"By focusing on prevention, and how to support a change in behavior of both perpetrators and targets—hopefully we will decrease the number of incidents and create a positive school climate for all students. Schools are free to pick their own programs, curriculums and activities – as long as they have a school-wide approach and are evidence based," explained Suzanne Greenfield, Director of D.C.'s Citywide Bullying Prevention Program.

D.C.'s schools must do more than just develop these bullying prevention policies, they are also required to publicize and enforce them too. Schools have been asked to demonstrate an implementation approach that is comprehensive and tailored to their individual needs and community.

Parents should ask to see the new bullying prevention policy at their child's school and to ask how they can support the school and their children in developing a climate where bullying is unacceptable. Parents should also find out who at the school level is the person in charge of investigating bullying incidents, as the law required schools appoint staff for this specific purpose on September 14th when the schools had to submit their policies.

Parental involvement will be critical in keeping schools accountable for implementing these policies appropriately and effectively, and for keeping students in D.C. safe and supported in schools.

Affordable Care Act

On October 1, 2013 the Affordable Care Act (ACA) became available to all citizens of the United States. Great...so what does that mean for you? It may not mean anything if you already receive health insurance benefits from your employer, are under the age of 26 and on your parents insurance, or if you are currently receiving Medicaid/Medicare. However, if you are currently paying for private health insurance, the ACA may be able to provide you with more affordable health insurance. And for those nearly 64,900 uninsured individuals living in the District, they will now have health insurance!

In the past, individuals were often denied health coverage for various reasons including: pre-existing conditions, a lack of affordability, employers not offering it, or they did not qualify for medical benefit assistance. However, now because of the ACA health insurance companies can no longer deny you coverage for pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart disease, or cancer. Employers with 50 or more full-time workers must provide "employer-sponsor insurance" to working individuals. And for those who could not

afford the high premiums, can now get a more affordable rate or may even now qualify for medical benefit assistance.

The District has established DC Health Link as your central marketplace where you can find, compare, and select the best insurance policy that meets your needs. Through DC Health Link, you can complete and submit an electronic application over the Internet at www.dchealthlink.com or by the contacting DC Health Link call center at 1-855-532-5465. With tools such as the "Calculate Your Cost" calculator feature, you are able to estimate your monthly premium health coverage cost, know your eligibility for Medicaid, or if you'll qualify for a premium tax credit. Also, through DC Health Link website you can locate and contact a DC Health Link Assister, who has been trained as an expert on eligibility and enrollment. If you have further questions or concerns you should contact DC Health Link at 1-855-532-5465 or email at info@dchealthlink.com.

What Parents Should Know about Section 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal funding. Those programs include schools, some after/before school programs, extracurricular activities and athletics, universities, and other state and local agencies.

To qualify under Section 504, a student must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Major life activities include: walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, caring for oneself, and performing manual tasks.

What are the steps in the 504 Process?

- 1. Child Find & Referral:** School districts have an obligation to conduct "child find", meaning that they must identify, locate and evaluate all children who are suspected of having a disability.
- 2. Initial Evaluations:** Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are responsible for conducting evaluations to determine whether the student has a qualifying disability under Section 504 and to determine appropriate services and/or placement to meet the student's unique needs. These evaluations must be conducted in a reasonable amount of time.
- 3. Eligibility Determination:** The 504 Team (parent, psychologist, teacher, social worker, 504 Coordinator, counselor, and anyone else deemed necessary) meets to review the evaluation reports,

teacher recommendations, physical condition of the child and their environment, to determine if the student has a disability that impacts his or her ability to access the general education curriculum without supplementary aids and services.

- 4. 504 Accommodation Plan:** If the child is found eligible for Section 504, the team must develop a plan describing the services and accommodations that will be provided to the child. The plan must also include who will provide the services/accommodations and where. Some examples of accommodations and services include extended time, modified work, audiobooks, support with organization skills, and preferential seating.
- 5. 504 Plan Review:** The 504 Plan should be reviewed frequently or at least annually to assess the student's progress with the accommodations and services being provided, to determine if additional services are needed or whether the student still requires 504 services.
- 6. Reevaluation:** Periodic reevaluations must occur, consistent with IDEA requirement at least once every three years. The purpose is to determine whether the student still has a disability impacting their education, if a 504 Plan is still needed, whether student requires new or fewer services under a 504 Plan and whether referral to the special education process is needed to obtain additional services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Improving Social Skills in Children: Local Resources that Can Help

Having positive peer relationships and friendships is important for all children. Many children have a hard time interacting with peers, making and keeping friends and being accepted within a larger peer group. Providing your child opportunities to play with other children their age, and gain personal and relational skills will promote positive social interactions as your child grows older. Here are some resources that are available locally that can assist with improving and building social skills for your child.

Groups 4 Kids: Groups 4 Kids is an online resource that provides a guide to social skills therapy groups in the DC metropolitan area. Visit their website for more information at www.groups4kids.com.

DC Autism Parents: DC Autism Parent's "DC Autism Buddies" program for ages 5 to 13 is designed to help children build on social skills. Visit their website at www.dcautismparents.org or call (202)-271-9262 for more information.

Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR): DPR's Cooperative Play Program is available for young children ages 18 months through 5 years old. The program is designed to introduce a structured play setting, with activities that engage the whole child and with emphasis on socialization. Contact DPR at (202) 673-7647, or visit www.dpr.dc.gov for more information.



SSI and Children with Special Health Care Needs

Raising children with special health care needs, especially in this economy, can cause a serious strain on a family's finances. Fortunately, there is help for families that are most in need. Children born or diagnosed before the age of 18 with certain health conditions are considered automatically eligible for Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) benefits. These disabilities include growth impairments, cerebral palsy, brain tumor, congenital heart disease, visual impairments, certain skin disorders, and other conditions that affect major body systems.

The definition of disability for children is somewhat different from the definition for adults. To be considered disabled, a child must have a physical or mental health condition that severely impacts the child's activities. The condition has to have lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months or is expected to result in death. Children with chronic medical issues whose disabilities do not automatically make them eligible for benefits can be determined to be eligible through examination by a doctor that the Social Security Administration identifies.

SSI benefits are funded through a partnership between the Federal government and local governments like the District of Columbia to help families provide for essential needs: shelter, food and clothing. The main benefit of SSI comes in the form of a monthly check. The amount of the check varies from state to state and from family to family. Some children who are medically eligible for SSI benefits may be found ineligible based on family income or resources.

However, some of these families can still get some assistance through special waiver programs that are administered by local organizations. These waivers help families cover necessary medical expenses through programs like Medicaid, and the local children's health insurance programs.

SSI is not insurance and it does not provide insurance. However, the majority of children who are eligible for SSI are also eligible for Medicaid. Some children with special health care needs who do not qualify for benefits under the children's definition of disability, may qualify under the adult definition when they turn 18 years old. Those who do not qualify because household income is too high may also qualify at age 18, when their parent's income is no longer a consideration.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) publishes The Blue Book, a guide to medical eligibility which is helpful to understand how eligibility for SSI benefits is determined medically for both adults and children. The SSA also publishes The Red Book (SSA Publication No. 64-030); a guide to financial eligibility which is helpful to understand how eligibility for financial benefits is determined and how work will impact those benefits. Both these publications are free of charge and can be downloaded online on SSA's website. You can also visit our Parent Resource Center to view a hard copy of The Red Book. The Blue Book is no longer available as a hard copy.