



Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.

The Parent Training and Information Center for the District of Columbia

AJE UPDATE

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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

25 E Street, NW,
 Washington, DC 20001
 Hours: 9am - 5pm (Mon - Fri)

3912 Georgia Avenue, NW
 (Mary's Center)
 Washington, DC 20011
 Hours: 9am - 3pm (Tues. & Thurs.)

Respite Resources for Families of Children with Special Needs

Respite is defined as “an interval of rest or relief.” Respite care is a temporary relief care designed for families of children or adults with special needs. Respite care can range from a few hours of care provided on a one-time basis to overnight or extended care sessions; it can be provided by family members, friends and skilled care providers.

Respite care services are provided to families either in-home or at a “drop-in” program. Caregivers have the option of having a skilled worker come into their home and care for the child, while the parent can leave the premises for relief. Participating in “drop-off” respite care varies depending on the organization providing the services. Typically in “drop-in” respite care, an organization will provide services for an allotted time for either the child with the special health care need and/or their siblings.

Certain service organizations, such as human service agencies or community-based private independent respite providers may offer “drop-in” respite services. Some organizations may have a sliding fee scale that is dependent on family income. While other providers may charge a flat rate per hour or overnight.

One of the agencies that provide respite care services is Health Services for Children with Special Needs (HSCSN). HSCSN is the District of Columbia’s dedicated Medicaid health plan for families. They coordinate all aspects of physical, mental, behavioral, and developmental care and services for its members; including respite care services. HSCSN services are dedicated to children and young adults with special health care needs up to age 26. There’s also the TEFRA/Katie Beckett Waiver which allows eligible

children with long-term disabilities or complex medical needs who would not otherwise be eligible to enroll in DC Medicaid and receive Medicaid-covered services, to receive all medically necessary services a child needs to take care of their basic primary care and preventive health needs.

Below is a list of local agencies that provide respite services to eligible families in the Washington, DC Metropolitan area. AJE does not endorse any individual care provider. Families must determine for themselves if these providers are able to support the needs of their family member(s).

Easter Seals serving DC/MD/VA
 (301) 920-9712
www.easterseals.com

Jill’s House
 (703) 639-5660
www.jillshouse.org

HSCSN
 (202) 467-2737
www.hscsn-net.org

McLean Bible Church- Tyson Campus
 (703) 770-8654
www.mbctyson.org

Amos Associates, LLC
 (301) 315-6374
www.amosassociates.org

5K Walk and Roll for Parent and Youth Empowerment



While developmental, health, and learning challenges are increasingly common in our culture and more readily diagnosed, many parents still struggle to find accurate information, guidance, and the help they need to find and maintain the education their children need to thrive. Currently, there are over 11,000

students enrolled in specialized education in the District of Columbia, which illustrates that the need for parent and youth support in D.C. is imperative. At Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc. (AJE) we seek to empower parents to be effective advocates for their children, as well as youth to have strong self-advoca-

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cy skills to succeed. AJE is celebrating our work by bringing the community together for our 4th Annual 5K Walk and Roll for Parent and Youth Empowerment: Supporting the Differently-Abled on Saturday, September 20, 2014 from 7:30 am to 12:00 pm at Hains Point: 927 Ohio Drive, SW, Washington, D.C. 20001. All are welcome to participate! With your support, we can reach our goal and improve the lives of children who are differently-abled. See you at Hains Point on September 20th! For more

information contact Shayla Harris at (202)678-8060 or shayla.harris@aje-dc.org.

To register, visit www.aje-dc.org. The registration fees are \$20 for adults, \$5 for K-12 youth, and free for children under 6 years old. When a group is formed with 10 adults or more who register, the cost is \$15 per adult, instead of \$20. Groups are a perfect way to get your friends and colleagues together to support this cause.

Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.
The Parent Training and Information Center for the District of Columbia

REGISTER ONLINE @ WWW.AJE-DC.ORG

4TH ANNUAL
Walk and Roll
FOR PARENT AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
SUPPORTING THE DIFFERENTLY ABLED

WHEN: **SATURDAY, SEPT. 20, 2014**
WHERE: **HAINS POINT
927 OHIO DRIVE, SW**
TIME: **7:30AM-12:00PM**
CHECK IN @ 7:30 AM WALK+ROLL @ 8:00 AM

CONTACT:
SHAYLA HARRIS
FOR MORE INFORMATION
@ 202.678.8060
SHAYLA.HARRIS@AJE-DC.ORG
ADVOCATES FOR JUSTICE AND EDUCATION INC.
@AJE-DC #K12TOEMPOWER AJE-DC
PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE A FREE T-SHIRT + AWARDS AND FOOD AVAILABLE!

Parent's Corner: Travel Training for Children and Youth with Special Needs

One way to make sure our young adults are as independent as possible is to teach them how to navigate their community. Walking around the community is the first step to teaching them how to get around.

However, very often they may want to attend an event or visit a friend that is outside your immediate block. How will they get there if you or a trusted friend is not able to take them? Do they have to just stay home, wishing they could go out? There is another option that we as parents have to prepare for it.

Parents of children with special needs become accustomed to providing protection and safety when navigating the world at large. We may find it quite difficult to loosen the apron strings enough to even imagine our children getting on the Metro bus or Metrorail without us. At some point, however, our parents had to let us go. We learned how to travel to school, to the corner store, to the library, to a friend or relative's home and for some of us to work. Our children and youth are entitled to the same learning experiences. Because they may have some challenges that could compromise their safety, some students with disabilities may need special assistance. This assistance comes in the form of travel training. One may find travel trainers throughout the community. Some teachers, social workers, and case managers may provide travel training to their students and clients.

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) contracts with MTM, Inc., a healthcare and transportation management company to provide travel training for individuals twelve



years old and older with disabilities. That training is individualized, one-to-one, and varies in the level of intensity to meet the needs of the trainee. WMATA also has trainers to teach group travel training and individualized, non-intensive training. This travel training is available for customers with disabilities as well as senior customers, with or without disabilities and it is offered at no cost to Metro customers. The goal of travel training is to enable and empower customers to travel independently using the accessible Metro bus and Metrorail systems to a regularly visited destination and back. Contact WMATA at (202) 962-2700 or email TravelTraining@wmata.com for more information or to enroll in their travel training program.

How do I enroll my child in MTM's Travel Training Program?

The first step is making a referral. Call MTM at 1-866-796-0601 with the trainee's name, contact and other requested information to set up an in-home interview. An MTM trainer will come to

your residence to learn about your youth's travel goals and current skills, and initiate a travel assessment.

Who are the trainers? What are their backgrounds? Can I trust them with my loved one?

Not everyone can be a travel trainer. MTM trainers must pass a thorough background check including reference checks and FBI background check as well as possess the specific skills and traits in assessment, training individuals and groups, familiarity with the public transit system, experience working with individuals with a range of disabilities, and knowledge of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) among other competencies.

Can I go along on the training?

Absolutely! Trainers understand that the trainee and the families can be uncomfortable with the process. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to participate. The goal is to have a trainee successfully travel independently. The trainers invite parents/caregivers to be involved in the interview and travel planning process. The trainee is encouraged to bring their service animals, and whatever mobility aid they will use while traveling to the training. Trainers will provide feedback after each session.

Can my child's school provide travel training?

Yes. A student receiving transportation services through OSSE may transition from riding on an OSSE Division of Transportation (OSSE-DOT) bus to utilizing public transportation if the IEP Team determines that such a transition is appropriate. To facilitate this transition, IEP Teams may designate travel training when appropriate. Travel training is specialized instruction that enables stu-

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dents with disabilities who require this instruction to develop an awareness of the environment in which they live and to learn the skills necessary to move effectively and safely from place to place

within that environment. LEAs are responsible for providing travel training to a student, as a part of the requirement to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE), if such services are des-

igned on the IEP. OSSE-DOT does not provide travel training for students with disabilities.

Policy Updates: New Special Education Legislation Proposed in D.C.

During March 2014, the D.C. Council's Committee on Education introduced three bills to address the needs of students with disabilities in the District of Columbia. Below is a brief, non-exhaustive summary of the bills:

The Special Education Student Rights Act of 2014: This bill provides strengthened due process protections for parents and students. For instance, schools would be required to provide parents with copies of all documents discussed at an IEP meeting no less than 5 business days in advance. Generally, schools would also be required to submit a completed copy of an IEP within 5 days after an IEP meeting.

Additionally, the bill would allow parents who prevail at due process hearings to request compensation for the cost of expert witnesses. This bill also explicitly allows adult students to appoint another competent adult to receive notices and participate in meetings about their educational programs.

The Enhanced Special Education Services Act of 2014: This bill would reduce the timeline that a school has to evaluate a student after an initial referral is made for special education services from 120 days to 60 days. It would also require the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to expand eligibility for early intervention to include more children. It will also require OSSE to set new baseline standards for special education transportation services. Additionally, schools would need to begin transition planning at age 14 instead of age 16. Further, IEP teams would be required to develop a plan to connect students with disabilities with available adult services at least 1 year before completing high school.



The Special Education Quality Improvement Act of 2014: This bill would allow charter schools to provide admission preference for students in particular disability categories. It would also require all new charterschools to be solely legally responsible for their compliance with special education law. Current charter schools would be required to phase out their reliance on DCPS to supervise their special education compliance. Additionally, this bill would further empower the Ombudsman for Public Education to investigate recurring parent complaints.

AJE collaborated with the DC Council's Committee on Education in May and June to host community discussions about the proposed legislation. The Committee on Education held a public hearing in June 2014 on the proposed legislation. If you did not attend the D.C. Council's public hearing or AJE's information sessions, and want to provide input on the legislation you can contact your councilmember or members of the D.C. Council Education Committee.

Review of DCMR

OSSE is initiating a review of key components of the D.C. Municipal Regulations (DCMR), the local regulations that govern special education in D.C. Input from surveys and focus groups will be used to inform these revisions and to develop a new five-year state-wide systemic improvement for special education. Below are the dates for the next upcoming surveys and focus groups on specific content areas:

Specialized Instruction and Caseload/Class Size
July 23: Stakeholder Survey Released (survey closes Aug 13)
Sep 4: Parent/Community Focus Group

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)/ Discipline Procedural Safeguards
Sep 24: Stakeholder Survey Released (survey closed Oct. 15)
Oct. 11: Parent/Community Focus Group

Graduation Pathways, Secondary Transition, and IEP Certificate of Completion
Nov 10: Stakeholder Survey Released (survey closed Dec. 1)
Dec. 11: Parent/Community Focus Group

How to get involved: Focus groups will be held at OSSE, 810 First Street NE, Washington DC 20002.

Participants may RSVP for a specific focus group or receive an online participant survey by emailing OSSE.DSEPolicy@dc.gov or calling OSSE at (202) 727-6436.

AJE Move

Monday, August 11, 2014, AJE will be moved to a new office building located at 25 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001, which is located near Union Station. We will be sharing an office building with the Children's Defense Fund.

Our business contact information will remain the same: Phone: (202) 678-8060, Fax (202) 678-8062, Email: information@aje-dc.org. You may also reach us by completing an information request form on our website at www.aje-dc.org.





District of Columbia Home School Law

By law, the District of Columbia must ensure that resident children between ages five and seventeen are receiving an education. Parents and legal guardians have the option to provide this education in a home school program, which is overseen by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). The regulations governing home schooling in the District are found under the D.C. Municipal Code (DCMR), Title 5, Chapter 52. For the full text of the regulations, please visit the OSSE website listed below. Generally, the law establishes procedural rules for home schooling and creates a framework for determining a valid home schooling program. The District has a duty to comply with federal compulsory attendance and reporting laws, and thus OSSE must oversee all home schooling programs to ensure that home school students receive a regular and thorough education.

Under the law, the home school instruction must include at minimum: language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, health, and physical education. However, parents are not required to use programs, methods, or specific curricular framework used by the District's public schools. Parents are required to maintain a portfolio of home schooling materials and the child's work for at least one year. This portfolio must be made available to OSSE to review upon written request, but not more than twice per year.

Additionally, children receiving home schooling may participate in regular standardized testing at the child's neighborhood public school. This participation is voluntary and free of charge. In order to qualify to provide home

school instruction, the parent or legal guardian must have a high school diploma or its equivalent, or may petition OSSE for a waiver. Also, a parent or legal guardian may only home school their own child.

There are no additional requirements for students with special needs receiving home schooling. Home schooling is considering private instruction, but typically the District does not provide funding to students with special needs who are receiving home schooling.

What do parents need to do? Under the law, parents planning to home school their children must submit written notification via the "Notice of Intent to Home School" form to OSSE every year by August 15th.

If the child is already enrolled in a school, then this form must be submitted at least 15 days before the child is withdrawn and the school must be notified. Further, parents must notify OSSE in writing when there is a change of address or discontinuation of home schooling.

You can obtain the "Notice of Intent to Home School" form online at OSSE's website, www.osse.dc.gov or contact Stephanie Thomas, OSSE Home School Coordinator, at Stephanie.Thomas@dc.gov.

Additional resources: Home School Legal Defense Fund (www.hsllda.org); Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling Home Educators (<http://www.jbabhe.com>).