



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

AJE UPDATE

Volume 12, Issue2 • Back-to-School • August 2013

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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 Health Information Center, and the DC Parent Center.

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Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.
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REGISTER ONLINE @
WWW.AJE-DC.ORG

3RD ANNUAL

Walk & Roll
AGAINST BULLYING

WHEN: SATURDAY, SEPT. 21, 2013
WHERE: TIDAL BASIN @ THE JEFFERSON MEMORIAL
TIME: 7:30AM-12:00PM
CHECK IN @ 7:30 AM; WALK & ROLL @ 8:00 AM

CONTACT:
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PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE A FREE T-SHIRT + AWARDS AND FOOD AVAILABLE!

Come Together for Bullying Prevention: 3rd Annual 5K Walk & Roll Against Bullying

With the shocking fact that children with disabilities are two to three times more likely to be bullied than their nondisabled peers, we are called to spread awareness about these unwarranted challenges children with special needs face every day. Furthermore, in 2009 researchers found that students with disabilities were more worried about school safety and being injured or harassed by other peers compared to students without a disability. It is clear that these challenges impede their right to a normal life and appropriate education, whether bullying happens in the home, community or school.

Every day, more than 160,000 children nationwide stay home from school to avoid being bullied. Not only are the effects of bullying on a child felt immediately, but they can also be lifelong – or even tragic. That's why Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc. (AJE), is inviting the

community to support the cause at its 3rd Annual Walk and Roll Against Bullying on Saturday, September 21, 2013.

More than 100 racers will gather at the Jefferson Memorial to kick-off National Bullying Prevention Month. Registration is now open online at www.aje-dc.org. Race packet pick up for the Walk and Roll begins at 7:30 a.m., followed by a 3.1 mile walk/roll around the Tidal Basin at 8:00 a.m. Each participant will receive a complementary T-shirt, snacks and additional fun will also be provided.

During National Bullying Prevention Month in October – and throughout the year – the community is encouraged to use creative resources to educate and inspire others to join the movement.

The 411 on Allergies

Allergies, our bodies' abnormal reaction to allergens, foreign invaders also called triggers, affect 1 in 5 Americans today. Allergies come in several varieties: environmental, animal, food, drug and seasonal, to name a few. Allergies can cause reactions that are mild, moderate or severe. Ranging from reactions like itchy rashes, sneezing, runny nose, reddening and/or swelling, nausea and vomiting, shortness of breath, and in the most severe cases, loss of consciousness.

Today, more children from 3-5 years of age are presenting with allergies and fewer of them are growing out of those allergies. Nowadays, it is common to have blanket, preventive measures in place in the school setting. The ultimate goal is to minimize the chance of a person at risk for severe or life threatening reaction to have such a reaction while at school. For instance, many schools and daycare centers prohibit certain foods and treats from being served to any student. Peanut butter and jelly, a lunch bag staple for generations, especially in warmer months when the risk of meat and mayo spoilage is high, is no longer allowed. It isn't served in the cafeteria nor are students allowed to bring it to school for lunch at most schools. It is imperative that your child's school is aware of his or her triggers and knows how to treat the child until emergency help arrives.

How do you know if you or your child has an allergy?

Most parents find out their child has allergies when they have an unexpected reaction to something they have given them or allowed them to be around. The tests for allergies are generally not part of any comprehensive physical exam. There has to be suspicion that an allergy exists based on past reactions to triggers. Then you get the allergist to run either skin tests or blood tests to determine what the triggers are.

I think my child is having an allergic reaction to something. What should I do?

This really depends on the type of trigger. If the child has any severe symptoms like shortness of breath, call 911. Most importantly, learn about your child's allergic reactions and ask the doctor about specific steps you should take when the reaction arises.

I know my child has allergies, so how do I know if this is an allergy or a cold?

While allergies and cold share some symptoms, such as sneezing, runny eyes and noses, nasal and sinus congestion, colds have a few other symptoms that allergies do not share. Colds may present with flu like symptoms such as fever and aches. Allergies never present with fever or aches. Colds typically last 7 to 14 days. Allergies continue to persist as long as there is exposure to the triggering allergen.

What is the best treatment?

The best treatment is actually prevention. This requires that the triggers are known and can be avoided. When that fails there are medications designed to reduce or stop the reactions. These are both prescription or over the counter antihistamines. The epi-pen delivers a single shot of a powerful antihistamine called epinephrine. It's most effective when used as the symptoms are just starting. The epi-pen should travel with the person with allergies. School children with severe allergic reactions should have one at home as well as one at school.

Facilitated IEP

The District of Columbia school system has become one of several districts across the nation to implement Facilitated IEP as an alternate option for resolving special education disputes. Funded by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), the Facilitated IEP Demonstration Project will afford parents and schools the opportunity to resolve disagreements involving the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Facilitated IEP is a voluntary process that can be used when all parties to an IEP meeting agree that the presence of a neutral third party would help facilitate communication and the successful drafting of the student's IEP. This process is not necessary for most IEP meetings. It is used when parties cannot agree on the IEP and the issues are creating a negative atmosphere that's not productive to collaboration.

Who are the facilitators?

The facilitator is a neutral party and is not affiliated with the public school system. Facilitators have various backgrounds and expertise including parents, former educators, school administrators,

former special education directors, attorneys and social workers. All facilitators have expertise in meeting facilitation and have understanding of special education law and procedures.

What is the role of the facilitator?

The facilitator helps members of the team focus on the issues at hand. The facilitator does not make decisions for the team and is not an advocate for either party. The facilitator also ensures that all participants are heard during the meeting, interact with each other respectfully and reach decisions on issues that they agree on and next steps.

What issues can be addressed through Facilitated IEP?

Facilitated IEP can resolve issues related to identification, evaluation, educational placement, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational placement, and provision of free appropriate public education (FAPE).

What are the benefits of Facilitated IEP?

Facilitated IEP builds and improves relationships

among the IEP team members and between parents and schools. It models effective communication and listening skills, clarifies points of agreement and disagreement, provides opportunities for team members to resolve conflicts if they arise, and encourages parents and professionals to identify new options to address unresolved problems.

This process is also typically less stressful than formal proceedings and supports follow through and follow-up. Most importantly, the facilitated IEP meeting serves as the IEP meeting and does not require a separate IEP meeting to formalize agreements that are reached.

How can I request a Facilitated IEP?

To make a request or a referral for Facilitated IEP, please contact AJE at (202) 678-8060 or email information@aje-dc.org.

Establishing a Homework Routine that Works



By establishing daily routines for homework completion, you will not only make homework go more smoothly, but you will also foster a sense of order your child can apply later on in life, including at college and work. Below are a few steps to assist with creating an effective homework routine:

Step 1. Find a location in the house where homework will be done

- The location can be a desk in child's bedroom or the dining room table and should be generally quiet and away from distractions.

- Be sure to involve your child in the decision of the best homework location for them, which will also give them a sense of being heard

Step 2. Set up a homework center

- Try to have available in your child's homework center supplies your child is most likely to need to complete their homework, such as pencils, pens, colored markers, rulers, scissors, a dictionary and thesaurus.
- In the homework center there should be some sort of bulletin board that hold or displays monthly calendars, which will help you and your child keep track of long-term assignments.

Step 3. Establish a homework time

- Your child should practice the habit of doing homework at the same time every day. Developing a routine homework schedule is a great skill that will follow them throughout school and life.

Step 4. Establish a daily homework schedule

- Sit down with your child to develop a homework schedule.
- You should review all the assignments with your child and ensure they have the correct understanding of the task.
- A Daily Homework Planner is a useful tool to manage time spent on assignments, breaks, and when the assignments are completed.

Establishing a homework routine that works may take some trial and error, but once good habits are formed it will make all the difference as children progress into adulthood.

Adapted from: Homework: A Guide for Parents, by Peg Dawson.

Creating a Home File of your Child's School Records

Have you ever been asked by a teacher or administrator to provide a copy of your child's immunization record, recent report cards, or current Individualized Education Program (IEP)? Maintaining your child's educational and health records is very important. Knowing where to locate records when you need them will be useful whether at an appointment at the doctor's office, at school or a local service agency.

Here are some basic steps on how to create a home file for your child:

1. **Collection:** Collect all of your child's documents from the school, medical and health providers, extracurricular programs, etc. You should not depend on other agencies to maintain all of your child's documents. Some offices have records policies where documents may be destroyed after a certain period of time after services have been rendered to the family. In addition to the documents that you receive from the various agencies, you should also gather documents that you've developed, like telephone logs or email correspondences.
2. **Organization:** Organizing records can be challenging. There is no right or wrong way for organizing your child's records, but it must be organized in a way that you're comfortable with and it's easy to retrieve the document(s) that you're looking for. Here are some examples of organizing tactics:

- a. **Binder:** Binders are more durable for maintaining records for a long period of time. When using binders, you can insert dividers to separate documents into sections. You should also create a table of contents so that you know where to find records in the binder.
 - b. **Folders:** Some may find using folders labeled by year or by documents to be better for their organization system. When using folders, make sure that you separate documents by having a cover page and stapling or by using paper clips. You can also have colored folders and have each folder designated for specific records (e.g. progress reports, meeting notes, etc.). Make sure that you file all records in chronological order.
3. **Storage:** Now that your child's master file is complete, where do you put the file? You need to ensure that this file is accessible to you at all times when it is needed. Make sure your storage location is one you can remember.

It's time to get started on your home file for the 2013-2014 school year!



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Tips for a Successful IEP Meeting

The idea of an IEP meeting can conjure several emotions: anxiety, anger, and confusion. Good news...the tips in this article will provide you with guidance on how to prepare, present, and process your child's next individualized education program (IEP) meeting.

Before the IEP meeting

- Consider the vision you have for your child for the future as well as for the present year.
- List your child's strengths, needs, and interests and your major concerns about his or her education.
- Consider how your child's disability affects his or her education. Think about your child's educational progress. What has been working and what has not?
- If needed, plan to bring someone with you to the meeting, such as a spouse, relative, friend, or representative from a local disability organization.

At the IEP meeting

- Make sure others at the meeting never forget that the meeting is about a real child. Share your visions for your child, both short-term and long-term.
- Remember that diagnostic tests and assessments do not present the total picture. Discuss your child's strengths and needs and your concerns about your child's education.
- Make sure you understand. If you don't understand something, ask to have it explained in a way that you can understand. Expect that what you know about your child will be used in making decisions.

- Take the proposed IEP document home to review or ask that a copy be sent to you. You probably will not want to agree to a proposed IEP at the end of the meeting. You have 14 calendar days from the time you receive the written IEP to agree or disagree with the program in writing and return it to the school.

After the IEP meeting

- Your child's IEP must be reviewed at least once a year to determine whether the annual goals have been achieved and to revise the IEP if necessary.
- You must be informed regularly about your child's progress, at least as often as parents who have children without disabilities are informed about the progress their children are making. You will be informed about whether your child is making progress toward meeting the IEP goals, and whether the progress is enough to reach the goals. If your child is not making adequate progress, an IEP meeting should be held to review the IEP and make needed changes.
- You may request an IEP meeting at any time.

For further information, please visit our resource library or contact AJE at (202) 678-8060.