

## Helping At Risk Children Navigating Educational Services

### **Overview-**

Children who have suffered complex trauma often have difficulties in the classroom with academics and behavioral issues. Parents are the best advocates for their child and it is often difficult to navigate the educational system. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) offers a great deal of information about special education in Texas. Schools must proceed with a special education referral and evaluation, including informed parental consent, if a parent requests that the student be evaluated for services (TEA, 2006). Special education law requires specific timelines for all meetings and correspondence related to serving children.

The *Notice of Procedural Safeguards: Rights of Parents of Students with Disabilities* explains the specific rights and responsibilities of the parent in the special education process. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004 (IDEA 2004) requires school districts to give parents the *Procedural Safeguards* only one time a year, except upon: initial referral or on request for evaluation; the first occurrence of the filing of a due process hearing complaint; or upon request by a parent. (TEA, 2006). This document can be found at

<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/explansaf/>

### **Special Education Vocabulary-**

Response to Intervention (RTI)- RTI is the process of evaluating how well a child is responding to changes in instruction. It may also be referred to as instructional support team, problem solving process or a name designated by the local district. RTI is used as part of the evaluation process and its goal is to help students before they receive a referral to special education. However, if a parent feels that not enough is being done, comprehensive assessment is still required under the reauthorized law. Schools must evaluate all aspects of a student's performance and history before concluding that a disability does or does not exist. See <http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/rti.index.htm>

504 Modifications (504 plan)- Section 504 refers to the identification of children who may not qualify for special education services according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To meet the criteria for 504 a child must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; have a record of such impairment; or are regarded as having such impairment. For more information on section 504 and IDEA see

[http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/504\\_IDEA\\_Rosenfeld.html](http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/504_IDEA_Rosenfeld.html)

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)- All qualified persons with disabilities within the jurisdiction of a school district are entitled to a free appropriate public education. An appropriate education may comprise education in regular classes, education in regular classes with the use of related aids and services, or special education and related services in separate classrooms for all or portions of the school day. Special education may include specially designed instruction in classrooms, at home, or in private or public

institutions, and may be accompanied by related services such as speech therapy, occupational and physical therapy, psychological counseling, and medical diagnostic services necessary to the child's education. More information can be found through the U. S. Department of Education at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html#note1>

Individual Educational Plan (IEP)- The document created to give a child FAPE. According to (IDEA, 2004) the IEP must include the child's present levels of academic and functional performance; measurable annual goals; the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals are to be measured and reported to the parents; special education services, related services, and supplementary aids, schedule of services to be provided; program modifications or supports provided to school personnel on behalf of the child; explanation of any time the child will not participate along with nondisabled children; accommodations to be provided during state and district assessments that are necessary to the measuring child's academic and functional performance. More information can be found at <http://ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html>

Admission Review Dismiss (ARD)- This is an acronym used in some states including Texas to describe the process by which an individualized education program (IEP) is developed for a student in a special education program and the rights and responsibilities of a parent concerning the process. <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/ardguide/>

#### Resources-

Texas Education Agency- State and federal information can be found at the state website <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/>

Attorneys Pete and Pam Wright- This web site gives comprehensive information about all areas of special education including law, advocacy, and terminology. It also has links to other web resources dealing with special education. <http://www.wrightslaw.com>

Education Service Center- The state of Texas is divided into geographic regions to serve the educational needs of the state. Each region has an Educational Service Center that provides information, and training for parents and teachers. Fort Worth is a part of Region XI and Dallas is Region X. <http://www.esc11.net/escrxi/site/default.asp>

Advocacy, Inc.- This site provides information on advocacy, law and understanding policy associated with special populations. [www.advocacyinc.org](http://www.advocacyinc.org)

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, *Free Appropriate Public Education for Students With Disabilities: Requirements Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, Washington, D.C., 2007.