

We all belong

A newsletter for including children with extra support needs

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Parenting and Advocacy

Parenting is a multifaceted job that includes fostering children's growth and education so that each child reaches his/her fullest potential. One key component of parenting is advocacy, a topic on which there is an overwhelming amount of information available. The ideas of relatives, friends and invested community acquaintances may add even more opinions to the situation. All parents have to advocate for their children's rights, and when the children have extra support needs, the job becomes more intense.

There are many definitions for advocacy but the following is the one we will use for this newsletter: Advocacy provides active support and education in favour of a cause, idea or issue, ensuring that the rights of the person one is advocating for are protected.

Our newsletter will encompass advocacy from parents' perspectives as it relates to their values, beliefs and rights. It will also present the opportunities and challenges that professionals advocating on behalf of children and families may encounter on the quest for effecting change. Since a huge part of advocacy involves knowing who can support the process, there will be information about some agencies and people available for parents in their advocacy journey. The recommended reading section will highlight a few books that may be useful to parents and professionals.

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All parents have to advocate for their children's rights, and when the children have extra support needs, the job becomes more intense.

Often people are advocating for the inclusion of children in community programs, and it is our privilege to recognize agencies in Toronto that have risen to the task. There will also be an individual story from a parent who persevered through many challenges and as a result of her advocacy efforts, her child is now in a licensed child care program.

Some parents advocate independently for their children while others request professional or expert support. Advocacy works when parents and professionals build a trusting relationship and present a positive attitude toward each other's point of view. Professionals must remember that they are stepping stones in a child's life.

It is important to respect parents' philosophies regarding parenting itself and to remember that they have wishes and dreams for their children.

*Cindy Stamoulakatos ECEDH, RECE
Resource Supervisor,
Toronto Children's Services*

A Parent's Journey in Advocacy

There are many approaches to parenting and many different dynamics within families. However, there are some similar attributes that transcend our differences. The common bond is parents' desire to see their children succeed, gain acceptance, contribute to society and to be loved and feel loved.

Parenting a child with special needs often elicits an even stronger desire and emotional response to having their child included. Ensuring that every child belongs from a parenting advocacy viewpoint involves various components. This article offers some thoughts on how parents may best approach their advocacy role.

You Know Your Child Best

As a parent you must trust that you know your child better than any professional. This knowledge provides you with the foundation for your role as a parent advocate in any discussions about your child and their developmental needs.

While it is important to learn from professionals, do not leave all the decisions to them. Through your advocacy journey you will need to hold steadfast to your own beliefs about what is best for your child. The road may not be easy, however, with each step you take, you will learn and you will become a stronger and more effective advocate. Remember, it should be under your direction that professionals support you and your child.

Starting Early

The sooner you begin your advocacy journey, the more comfortable you will become. In Ontario, there are many services that support the early years of children's development. Most of these services are free, but due to demand, you may be placed on a waiting list.

The early foundational years are the time to learn the ropes and become an active participant in identifying and accessing all the services that your child needs. It is important to find and work closely with professionals who can mentor and support you along the way. Connecting with other families and groups may also increase your support network and help you find and/or create needed services.

Documentation is another essential component of advocacy. Ensure that you keep written notes and document all



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important meetings and discussions as they occur. If you are given verbal assurances, politely request that you are sent confirmation of these details in writing. Before beginning any discussions on the telephone, politely request the name, title and contact phone number of the person to whom you are speaking. If you are not comfortable with writing in English, record your notes in your preferred language.

Know Your Rights

To successfully advocate for your child, it is important to know what your child's rights are. This does not mean becoming an expert in disability law, but rather educating yourself in terms of the rights and legal entitlements of your child. There are agencies and individual advocates that can provide support in this area and some of these resources are listed within this newsletter. Remember that other parents can be a wonderful source of information, as they may have previously dealt with a situation similar to yours.

Work to stay strong, know your limits and understand that advocacy is a journey not a destination. Each road will be mapped differently but through it all you will learn and you will grow, as will your child. Try to schedule in "fun time," maintain your sense of humour and remember that in the end, attitude is everything. As Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can or can't, you're right."

My suggestion is to think you can.

*Tasnim Bhujwala, B.A., R.E.C.E., R.T.
Resource Educator, Toronto Children's Services*

Key Principals of the Advocate's Role

An advocate's role is a complex one. It involves speaking on behalf of someone or supporting another person to communicate his or her thoughts, ideas and feelings. It involves listening to others, being able to negotiate and communicate effectively, provide and receive information and empower others to advocate for themselves.

Listed below are a few key principals to keep in mind when beginning your journey into advocacy.

- The successful advocate embraces the philosophy that parents are their child's best advocate and assists parents in acquiring the skills needed to navigate through a variety of service systems such as health, education and recreation.
- Advocacy should help people make informed choices, not make choices for them. An advocate needs to provide good quality information that is up to date and practical.
- Good communication skills are essential for the successful advocate. It can help you negotiate and solve problems, provide information and discover a more accurate understanding of what other people want. Remember that good communication skills are not always about words, it is just as important to communicate that you are listening.

Advocacy should help people make informed choices, not make choices for them.

"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them"

- Albert Einstein

- Good record keeping is a priority. All meetings, telephone calls and communication must be documented effectively and provided to the parent, or person you are supporting, in a timely manner.
- A good advocate will take the time to build a foundation of trust and really get to know the parent and child they are supporting. An advocate will listen, support and respect a parent's decisions and encourage parents to voice their opinions and express what is important to them.
- Effective advocacy always requires follow up, to ensure that any decisions or agreements that have been made are carried out efficiently.

Advocacy for yourself or someone else takes time and practice. Whether this is your first journey into advocacy or you are a seasoned veteran, remember that even the best advocates don't know everything. Be honest in your abilities, ask questions, source information, be persistent, have a positive attitude and get involved.

*Denise Armstrong E.C.E, R.T
Resource Educator, Toronto Children's Services*



A good advocate will take the time to build a foundation of trust and really get to know the parent and child they are supporting.

Who to Contact for Help

The following are just a few of many available advocate resources parents can contact when they need support.

Education Advocates

Special Needs Resource staff

Special Needs Resource staff support all licensed child care programs within the City of Toronto. They are available to offer resources, information and guidance to the parents of children who attend these programs. They can help parents prepare for and attend school meetings, share information on how to navigate the school system and offer support as needed.

Parents may contact their child's program to connect with staff or they may visit www.toronto.ca/children

Education Liaison for Community Living Toronto, Sharon Ross

Sharon Ross is the Education Liaison for Community Living Toronto. She provides consultation for children and youth who are clients of Community Living Toronto. To access her help, call the Access/Information Coordinators at 647-426-3220 and 647-426-3219 to make a referral. Sharon conducts parent workshops, writes articles and as part of the Education Committee she developed a parent education handbook.

For information e-mail Sharon at sross@cltoronto.ca. To access a Parent Education Handbook, visit www.communitylivingtoronto.ca/children/education/rights/index.html

Educational Advocate, Lesley Georgina Rayner

Lesley Georgina Rayner is an Educational Advocate parents may contact when they are not getting the services they want for their children, and in her own words "are at their wits end." Her objective is to work towards conflict resolution between families and the school board and help both parties work together. Every year Lesley updates her resource CD that includes practical information for parents on aspects of educational supports. The CD can be purchased directly from Lesley. Clients can be referred from The Hospital for Sick Children, Clarke Institute and/or contact her directly at 416-487-0921.

Lesley's e-mail address is norman.rayner@sympatico.ca



Educational Advocate, Lindsay Moir

Lindsay Moir is an Educational Advocate with more than 31 years of experience with the Ministry of Education in the Special Education field. One of his specialties is assisting families and agencies in the practical application of special education legislation. He offers a wide range of parent and professional training across Ontario for school boards, parent associations, group homes and community agencies. Lindsay will offer advocacy services to agencies and families. Some services are free and some have fees.

Lindsay can be contacted at l.moir@sympatico.ca or visit his website at www3.sympatico.ca/l.moir

Family Support Specialist, June Chiu

June Chiu is a Family Support Specialist at the Resource Centre at Bloorview Kids Rehab. She is available to help families find an advocate that is best suited for their particular issue or situation. June organizes education information sessions on a variety of topics with the objective of empowering families and increasing their skills in advocacy. The services offered in the resource centre, by phone, email or in person are free.

June can be contacted at 416-425-6200 ext. 3319 and jchiu@bloorview.ca

Ministry of Education

Parents can access information directly from the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Contact 416-325-2929, 1-800-387-5514, e-mail info@edu.gov.on.ca or visit www.edu.gov.on.ca

Legal Support

Child Advocacy Project

Child Advocacy Project is a free service of Pro Bono Law Ontario. It is dedicated to ensuring that the public education rights of children and youth are accessible to everyone. Lawyers volunteer their time to provide assistance on legal issues. The website contains general information on the program, how and when to apply and a library of resources for students and families.

Contact Nicole Kellow, Project Coordinator at 416-977-4448 ext. 226, e-mail info@childadvocacy.ca or www.childadvocacy.ca to make a referral. Contact Wendy Miller, Project Director at 416-977-4448 ext. 230 or 1-866-466-5329

Justice for Children and Youth

Justice for Children and Youth is a project partner with Child Advocacy Project. It is a community legal clinic that specializes in protecting the rights of, and providing legal advice and representation, information and assistance to, children and youth, parents in education matters, professionals and community groups across Ontario.

For further information call 416-920-1633, 1-866-999-5329, e-mail info@jfcy.org and www.jfcy.org

ARCH Disability Law Centre

ARCH Disability Law Centre is a specialty legal clinic that is committed to advancing the equality rights of persons with disabilities across Ontario. ARCH provides education to the public on disability rights and to the law profession on disability law. ARCH offers a legal and referral service, maintains an informative website on disability and the law.

Contact ARCH at 416-482-8255, 1-866-482-2724, TTY 416-482-1254, 1-866-482-2728, e-mail at archlib@lao.on.ca or www.archdisabilitylaw.ca

Online Law Information

Parents may access further information on Ontario laws.

Visit www.e-laws.gov.on.ca or laws.justice.gc.ca

Parent Relief

Respiteservices.com

Respiteservices.com is a network of respite services that offer short term case management for families with children or adults who have a developmental and/or physical



“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen”

– Winston Churchill

disability across Ontario. Respite is a break for families from caring for someone with special needs. Anyone can access respite services and/or register on behalf of a family. Once a family has been registered an Access Facilitator will review the registration, determine what services are being requested and help support the family.

For further assistance call the “In Office” Access Facilitator at 416-322-6317 ext. 1, e-mail info@respiteservices.com or www.respiteservices.com

Parent Advocacy Groups

Integration Action for Inclusion

This is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to educational inclusion and community living for people who need extra support. The group provides support to parents and friends seeking to enrich the lives of their children. It is their belief that the best way to prepare children who need extra support for community life is to educate them alongside their peers. This is achieved through individualized programming and supports for all children. Integration Action for Inclusion operates strictly on a volunteer basis. It has local chapters throughout Ontario. Members provide and receive support and education on inclusion.

For more information visit www.integration-inclusion.com

Family Alliance Ontario

This is a group of citizens that offer knowledge, tools and networking opportunities to individuals with extra support needs and their families. This organization helps its members and the larger community realize a vision that includes having valued relationships, choice and control in their lives, and enables inclusion through meaningful participation in their communities. The group gives families the opportunity to become more involved in strategic change at a provincial level, to meet, work with and be energized by each other.

For further information visit www.family-alliance.com

Ontario Coalition for Inclusive Education

This is a group of organizations that are dedicated to supporting individuals with extra support needs, their families and advocates. The focus of the coalition is to speak out against the segregation of individuals with extra support needs and to promote quality, inclusive education in Ontario.

For further information visit www.inclusive-education.ca

Parent's Advocacy in the School

This is a group of individuals with experience in the fields of education and advocacy. The goals of this group are to network with parents and educators of children with extra support needs and create opportunities for parents and educators to collaborate to provide appropriate programming for the children involved. They can provide parents with resources on other community groups and organizations such as the Special Education Advisory Committee and the Children's Aid Society of Toronto. Dr. Forman, the founder of this advocacy group, offers parents coaching sessions in becoming an advocate, has written a book titled *Exceptional Children - Ordinary Schools: Getting the Education You Want for Your Special Needs Child* and has produced a resource guide for finding parent advocates.

For more information call 416-429-8511 or go to www.parentsadvocacy.com



"Could we change our attitude, we should not only see life differently, but life itself would come to be different"

– Katherine Mansfield

Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services

This is a volunteer association that represents members from 20 children's treatment centres across Ontario. Their focus is to influence provincial policy, planning and programs in favour of the children and youth with physical, communication and developmental delays. Bloorview Kids Rehab is the children's treatment centre that is a member in Toronto. You may access Family Net from the website for information on how to advocate for your child, links to resources such as child care, assistive devices and parenting tips.

For further information go to www.oacrs.com or call Linda Kenny at 416-424-3864

Compiled by Elyssa Marks, RECE, RT, MEd. and Lisa Iozzo, RECE, BA. Resource Educators, Toronto Children's Services



TRY THIS:

Tips on Meetings

Organizing and keeping yourself informed can help ease some of the stress often associated with meeting professionals to discuss your child's strengths and needs. Below are a few ideas that may help you during the process and planning of these meetings.

- 1. Plan the time of your meeting.** Make it at least 20 minutes and leave your child with someone else when you go.
- 2. Before you go, write down the points you want to make.** Write in terms of your child rather than in terms of the teacher so you'll make your point without criticizing the teacher's conduct. Try "He is unhappy and doesn't want to go to school," rather than "You make him unhappy." Or "He seems to get so much homework," rather than "You give him too much homework."
- 3. Decide exactly what outcomes you want from the meeting.** Think in terms of practical outcomes so you don't end up just talking about your issues. Try to think of practical answers and ask the teacher to help you out with this. Write down the practical steps you think of.
- 4. Avoid or defuse argument by keeping to your point.** If an argument is developing, slow your conversation down and pause to regain some calm. Then, keep repeating your main issue. It might be that Johnny is unhappy at school. If the teacher doesn't really address your issue by, for example, telling you how good the classroom reading scheme is, you might say something like, "I'm sure this program is good but Johnny is unhappy about reading. The program isn't meeting his needs."
- 5. Make it clear that you're willing to help.** Offer any suggestions you've thought of and ask what the school can do to help Johnny. Can Johnny be included in an existing program? If not, can the school psychologist suggest anything? Are there volunteers who could help Johnny? Can you be trained to help?



Before a meeting, write down the points you want to make and leave your child with someone else if you can.

- 6. Plan a follow-up.** Meet again with the teacher; send a note each week; call to remind the teacher. Do something. Then you can monitor whether the practical steps you thought up are happening and whether they're any good.

This information is courtesy of Children's Disabilities Information website at www.childrensdisabilities.info/advocacy/advocacy-conference.html.

TRY THIS:

How to Create a Parent Resource Binder

When supporting a child with extra support needs it can be an overwhelming task to organize and present the multitude of reports and information received in a meaningful and useful manner.

Creating a parent resource binder is one way to collect your child's information, making it easier to keep organized.

To get started you'll need:

- a two-inch binder
- a set of index tabs
- clear, plastic sheet protectors
- hole punch

Divide your binder into sections and organize it so that it is easy to use and present. When adding information, think about the type of information you would like to share and who you will be sharing this information with.

Dedicate the first section in the binder to getting to know your child. Provide a picture of your child and include information such as:

- your child's strengths and abilities
- favourite activities
- completed artwork
- your child's interests, etc.

The remainder of your binder could include information such as:

- school information
- child care information
- reports from professionals
- medical information
- developmental milestones
- family goals
- resources such as brochures, business cards, etc.

A parent resource binder is an organizational tool that provides an opportunity to set goals, reflect on accomplishments and share what is important to you, your child and your family.

*Denise Armstrong, E.C.E, R.T
Resource Educator, Toronto Children's Services*



Creating a parent resource binder is one way to collect your child's information, making it easier to keep organized.

*“Information gives you
the tools you need to get
the best for your child.”*

*– Jan Burke-Gaffney, Hamilton Family Network,
from The Kit: Keeping it Together*

Resources for building your own binder

Here are some resources to help you build your own parent resource binder.

The Kit: Keeping it Together

www.canchild.ca

Developed by CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research and the Hamilton Family Network. The website provides information on purchasing the binder as well as template work sheets that are available for printing.

Community Living Toronto

www.connectability.ca

Parent resource binder information is located in the Learning Together section,

under the heading of “Creating a Child's Information Binder.” Template work sheets are available for printing.

Parents as Partners

www.parents-as-partners.ca

How to make your own parent resource binder, located in the parent resource section of the website. Template sheets are available for printing.

The Advocates Journal

Written by Cora Koculynn and Georgina Rayner. For more information you may wish to email: theadvocatesjournal@hotmail.com or

write to 5 Martin Road, Toronto, Ontario, M4S 2V1.

**Silver Creek Association
for Children with Handicaps**
www.silvercreekpreschool.com

Silver Creek Preschool provides a workshop, offered once a year, to aid families in developing their own “All About Me” information binder. Contact 416-249-9770.

*Compiled by Denise Armstrong, E.C.E ,
R.T Resource Educator, Toronto
Children's Services*

Parent Comment

Michelle Wan, mother of Chloe, provided Lisa Iozzo, Resource Educator, Toronto Children's Services (RECE, BA) with insight into the challenges and successes of transitioning her child with extra support needs into a licensed child care centre.

How did you/your family advocate successfully for services and information you needed for your child?

Michelle: Our daughter Chloe has a very rare and complex medical condition. She is currently being followed by a large team of health care providers which include physicians at four different departments at SickKids Hospital in Toronto, her paediatrician, her stoma care nurse and her physical therapist. Because of the rarity of her condition, and due to the fact that it is not clearly visible, it is difficult to find support as the bulk of existing programs are geared towards patients with more common and/or visible disorders. This lack of existing support programs has made it necessary for us to advocate for Chloe's needs on several different levels:

Hospital System

We have worked closely with the patient representative's office and our social workers at SickKids Hospital to resolve inconsistencies in Chloe's hospital care plan and to identify physicians who possess the level of knowledge and experience necessary to treat her condition.

Local Level

We have been in contact with several agencies to obtain information with the goal of finding a solution to the gaps in our support plan. These agencies include: Mothercraft, Centennial Infant and Child Centre, Ostomy Toronto, Toronto Children's Services, Variety Village, the East End Community Health Centre, Toronto Public Health and Bloorview Kids Rehab.

We All Belong

"Just because your child may be different doesn't mean you can't experience incredible joy."

Provincial Level

We have kept an on-going dialogue between us and our Community Care Access Centre case manager to help her understand Chloe's condition better in order to obtain necessary supports in the areas of physical therapy and stoma care.

We have worked with a senior advocate in the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. In conjunction with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and Respite Services we were able to bring Chloe's case in front of a service resolution team to identify gaps in our support plan and come up with creative solutions.

We have also met with our MPP Michael Prue to raise awareness of the current problems surrounding the Special Services at Home program. While our family has been approved for support under this provincial program, we have been placed on a waiting list due to problems with available government funding.

What has been the family's greatest struggle in transitioning Chloe into child care?

Michelle: Because Chloe does not have a mental disability and her heart, kidney and lungs are not at risk, it has been recommended by all our health care professionals that she be

enrolled in a regular day care so that she can be socialized in a typical setting. However, because her medical needs require specialized training and daily monitoring, we were very concerned that the licensed child care system would not be able to provide adequate support.

A major struggle for us in finding daycare was the transition planning need to have Chloe fully registered in a centre

(continued on page 10)



Michelle and Adam had to learn how to advocate on behalf of daughter Chloe.

before a special needs training support plan can be put into place. This completely undermined our ability to find adequate care because once a particular daycare had been selected we would lose our waiting list spots at all other centres. In the event that the chosen centre was not able to handle our daughter's complex needs, one parent would be forced to quit work, leaving the family in a very difficult and stressful financial position. We, as the parents of a child with special needs, were not given the opportunity to tour the centres until we knew the exact centre our child would be registered in. We would have to blindly trust that a centre would be fully successful at integrating our child and provide the type of support that we would be comfortable with.

We were extremely fortunate to have found a childcare centre that was willing to make an exception by having an on-going dialogue about our daughter's care needs well before she was registered. The centre was very open about the challenges we faced, but agreed to work with us on a plan, which took several months to finalize. Our particular case also required me to provide nearly three weeks of specialized training, and my husband Adam to do follow-up training, for all daycare staff. This was something that could only have been done while I was on maternity leave.

We're extremely excited to report that everyone's hard work has really paid off. Chloe is very happy and fully integrated into the system and the daycare team was honoured with a 2009 CITYKIDS Inclusion award.

Do you have any advice or tips to help ease this transition?

Michelle: As a parent, you are your child's number one case manager. Every agency and health care worker has their own area of expertise and it's up to the parent to liaise between everyone, keep the lines of communication open and to follow up regularly to make sure everyone is on the same page. The goal is to create a positive environment where everyone is working as part of a team. Our particular daycare plan involved special meetings with our daycare resource teachers, group presentations to educate staff on medical terminology and equipment,

POETRY CORNER

You never know when someone
 May catch a dream from you,
 You never know when a little work
 Or something you may do
 May open up the windows
 Of a mind that seeks the light,
 The way you live may not matter at all
 But you never know – it might

And just in case it could be
 That another's life, through you,
 Might possibly change for the better,
 With a broader and brighter view,
 It seems it might be worth a try
 At pointing the way to what's right
 Of course, it may not matter at all
 But then again – it might

Author Unknown

individual training sessions for each staff member to learn the necessary practical skills, providing consultations for daycare staff with health care professionals in the community and creating "at a glance" instruction sheets and customized daily record reports to monitor progress. In addition, we have daily conversations with our daycare staff to answer any questions or discuss any updates.

What advice would you give to other families in similar circumstances?

Michelle: In my life, I've had the honour of working for an incredible mentor who is not only an inspiring manager but is also capable of great understanding among his employees. At the same time, he has never missed an opportunity to strengthen the bond with his wife and three beautiful children. He knows all too well about the challenges that life can bring and has had to live through the unthinkable: the loss of his two-year-old son who was born with serious health complications.

When my daughter Chloe was born, this man said to me, "Don't ever let yourself believe that something can't be done. You can achieve all the things you want in life, but you will need to go about it in a different way. Different does not have to mean worse. It's just different and it will take time to understand that."

This has been the single most important piece of advice for me as a parent. Just because your child may be different doesn't mean you can't experience incredible joy. When you believe in yourself and in your strengths you can achieve anything!

CHAMPIONS OF INCLUSION:

CITYKIDS Inclusion Awards

Early Learning and Care Programs within Toronto were recognized on January 26 for their Inclusionary Practices for children with special needs. The CITYKIDS Inclusion Awards were graciously hosted by the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, in the Lieutenant Governor's Suite at Queen's Park. The CITYKIDS Inclusion Awards honour Early Learning and Care Programs in each quadrant of the city for outstanding contributions within the area of Inclusion.

Lieutenant Governor Onley delivered the official greetings expressing that all the recipients demonstrated "that



The Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario celebrates with CITYKIDS Inclusion Award recipients from left – Anna Care (Blaydon), Darlene Pepe (Northwest), Anna Yu (Riverdale) and Mavis Campbell (St. Rose of Lima YMCA)

Photo: Paul Pahikainen

Award Recipients

The 2009 recipients honoured for their outstanding contributions were:

- North Quadrant: Blaydon Day Care Centre - Preschool Team
- East Quadrant: St. Rose of Lima YMCA - Senior Preschool Team
- South Quadrant: Riverdale Child Care Centre - Infant Team
- West Quadrant: Northwest Childhood Learning Centre - Preschool Team

Award Nominees

Nominations were also submitted for the following Early Learning Teams:

- Debbie Yeung Child Care Centre - Preschool Team
- Cabbagetown Early Learning Centre - Infant Team
- Family Day Scarborough - Ontario Early Years Team
- Immanuel Child Care Centre - Blue Jay Team
- Kids View Child Care Centre - School Age Team
- Queen's Park Child Care Centre - Senior Preschool Team
- University of Toronto Early Learning Centre - Preschool Team and Infant and Toddler Teams

children with special needs are entitled to participate in community programs simply because they are members of the community. They are not expected to earn their way in. Rather, it is up to the program designers and operators to ensure that the planning, training and support are in place to include all children."

Beverly Koven, Executive Director of Mothercraft Society also offered remarks before reading the citations reflecting the individual program teams' exceptional practices and heartfelt comments from parents of children with identified special needs.

The Lieutenant Governor presented the awards to the representatives for each Early Learning and Care Program with a CITYKIDS Inclusion award framed certificate. In a reception following the formal ceremony, the recipients and attendees celebrated with their colleagues and community professionals.

Congratulations to all the award recipients, and to those who were nominated, for your exemplary Inclusive practices!

Devon Physick, BA, RECE

*CITYKIDS, Service Navigator, Team Leader
Canadian Mothercraft Society*

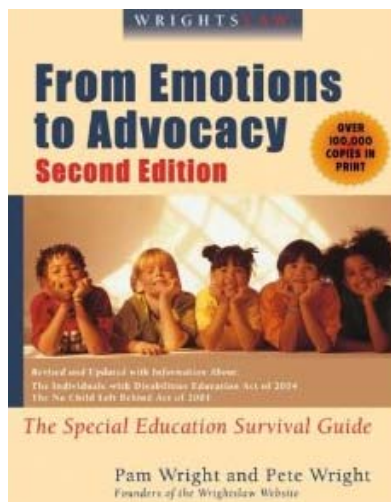
RECOMMENDED READING:

Wrightslaw: From Emotions to Advocacy: The Special Education Survival Guide, 2nd Edition

This book is a practical "survival guide" on how to advocate for children with disabilities.

Topics include: obstacles, common reasons for parent-school conflict, crisis management, and advocacy skills, including how to organize your child's file, write smart Individual Education Plan goals and objectives, create paper trails, write persuasive letters, and maintain control in school meetings. Includes worksheets, forms, sample letters.

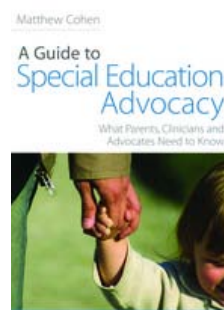
*Pam & Pete Wright, Wrightslaw,
Harbor House Law Press, 2006*



A Guide to Special Education Advocacy

A knowledgeable and in-depth description of the workings of the special education administration process in action, which guides parents through the potential pitfalls of special education, through the Individual Education Plan process and implementation.

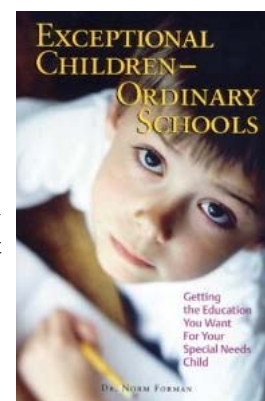
Matthew Cohen, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2009



Exceptional Children - Ordinary Schools: Getting the Education You Want for Your Special Needs Child

This book is a thorough guide, empowering parents in becoming their child's best advocate. It includes tips and practical suggestions/advice on how to access what you want for your child in the school system. Chapters discuss the different tests and assessments that your child may be required to do and a section on Special Education legislation, making you fully aware of your child's legal and educational rights.

Dr. Norm Forman, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2005



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