

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Accessing Educational Services: Navigating Through the School System in Kentucky**

Through collaboration between parents and schools, excellence is fostered in education for all students. Cooperative team efforts can help to identify students' strengths and needs for effective programming. Areas to consider when planning might include communication, social skills, stereotypical/repetitive behaviors, sensory needs, and academic issues. Working as a team, we can put the pieces of the ASD puzzle together one piece at a time.

This chapter describes how a child receives an educational identification of autism to qualify for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The chapter also provides an explanation of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and offers tips for participating successfully in the ARC meeting, including suggestions for communicating effectively with school personnel.

**Please refer to the Glossary at the end for a description of the terms used in this chapter**

### **Educational Identification**

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), all children with disabilities have the right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). The local school district is responsible for locating, identifying, and evaluating all children who may be eligible for special education services from 3 to 21 years of age. This process is called Child Find.

If you are concerned about your child's development and the child is 3 years old or younger, you can contact the First Steps program in your county, as discussed in Chapter 2. If you are concerned about a child who is 3 and older, you can request support from your local school district. If your child is in preschool or kindergarten, request a meeting with your child's teacher to discuss your concerns. Ask the teacher to observe your child's performance in social as well as academic situations and compare those observations with your own.

### **Pre-Referral**

If your child does not attend school and does not currently have a diagnosis, discuss your concerns with your pediatrician or contact your local school district. Your school

district is responsible for identifying all children with disabilities. Ask to speak to someone in the special education department. When you explain your concerns, your child will be referred for screening to determine if further evaluation is necessary. If your child is in school and needs help to be successful in the classroom, school personnel will initiate one of the following to identify the type of support your child needs:

- **Assistance Team (AT)** This is a group of school personnel who meet to support classroom teachers in addressing issues with an individual student, whether the issues are behavioral or educational. The team identifies supports the student may re-quire to be successful in the classroom. Parents are included in the AT process for their child.
- **Student Intervention System (SIS)** This is the process of identifying and assessing the effectiveness of interventions identified to support a student who is experiencing learning difficulties. The interventions will be identified and carried out by school personnel.

In both instances, the accommodations and supports are carried out for a specific length of time while data is being collected on the student's progress. The AT/SIS team will meet to review the data and then determine whether to continue the intervention process by adding and/or adapting supports. If the team feels that the student is not responding to the intervention or showing expected progress, the team must request a multi disciplinary evaluation.

## **The Admissions and Release Committee (ARC)**

The ARC team is a group of individuals responsible for making all decisions about the identification, evaluation, placement of children with disabilities, and the provisions of FAPE. The ARC team can also be called the Individual Education Program (IEP) team. The ARC team consists of the following people:

- **Parents/guardians**  
You, the parent(s), are a very important and equal member(s) of the ARC. There is no other person who knows your child better.
- **General education teacher**  
Under IDEA, a general education teacher should attend the meeting to share information about the general curriculum or same aged peers if the child is or may be participating in the general education environment.
- **Special education teacher**  
This should be your child's special education teacher or a special education teacher with knowledge of the suspected disability. He/she should attend to share information about how your child learns. The special education teacher will help the general education teacher assess what accommodations and/or modifications your child will need to be successful in the general education classroom.

- **Representative of the school district or Placement Specialist**  
The district representative/placement specialist is able to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction, has knowledge of the general curriculum, and has the ability to commit resources.
- **Psychologist/Individual who can interpret test results**  
For any testing or evaluation that may have been done, IDEA requires that someone attend the meeting who can interpret test results and how the results may impact instruction. The results must be explained so that everyone involved understands their implications.
- **Individual with expertise of child**  
At your discretion, an individual with knowledge or special expertise of your child should attend.
- **Related service personnel**  
If the ARC identifies a need for related services, such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, social work services, etc., it is important that the relevant related service personnel attend the meeting. His or her expertise is vital to planning a program.
- **Your child**  
When appropriate, the child should be a member of the team. Students should be involved when they are capable of participating in the decision-making, and should always be involved when issues regarding transition are discussed. If the student cannot be present or does not want to attend, efforts must be made to establish the interests and concerns of the child before the meeting.
- **Representative of public agency**  
When appropriate, a representative of a public agency to discuss community programs and transition services may attend. This agency may be involved in paying for transition services.
- **Representative of preschool program**  
When the child is in the preschool program a representative of that program should be included in the meeting.

While each of these people may not be in attendance at your child's ARC, the team needs his/her expertise. If your child's needs indicate that a specific area of knowledge is needed, the team can request their input in writing prior to the meeting.

**ARC Members**-The IEP is developed by a team that consists of the following:

- You as the parents
- The child, if appropriate

- The child's general education teacher
- The child's special education teacher
- A school district representative who is qualified to provide or supervise the specially designed instruction, is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum, and can commit resources (i.e., school principal, counselor, specialist)
- A person who can interpret test results and how the results may impact instruction, if applicable
- Related service personnel (Speech/language pathologist, Occupational Therapist)
- If the child is being served in early intervention programs, a representative from the preschool program.

### Who else can attend ARC meetings?

**IDEA allows parent or the school district to bring anyone to a meeting who has working knowledge about the child or the child's disability.**

## Identification, Evaluation, and Placement Process

Federal and state laws and regulations have specific steps to make sure the rights of children with disabilities are protected. These rights include making sure that you have a chance to work as part of a team with the school district in making decisions about your child's education.

The following steps are carried out in the process of identification, evaluation, placement and provision of FAPE:

1. Referral
2. Evaluation
3. Eligibility
4. Development of the IEP
5. Placement
6. Implementation
7. Program Review

## Referral

When parents, school staff, or other individuals think that a child might have a disability and need special education services, they give that information to the office of the Special Education Director. This is known as a referral.

If your child is referred for special education services, you will be notified in writing, invited to attend an Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) meeting, and asked for permission to evaluate your child.

## Evaluation

In order to best serve the needs of your child, the ARC team uses the information from the full and individual evaluations to decide if your child meets the eligibility guidelines for a particular type of disability and whether your child may need special education and related services.

The school collects information about your child from many different people and in many different ways. Evaluation sources include:

- Your child's educational history
- The observations and opinions of professionals who have worked with your child
- Your child's medical history when is related to their performance in school
- Psychological evaluations
- Your knowledge of your child in relationship to his/her school experiences, abilities, strengths, challenges, and behavior outside of school.

The evaluation process involves several tasks:

- Reviewing existing information
- Deciding if more information is still needed
- Collecting more information about your child using various assessment tools.

Once you have given your written consent for your child to be individually evaluated, qualified professionals will be chosen to help assess your child's abilities and needs. Professionals will observe your child. They may give your child formal assessments or conduct informal interviews with your child. They are trying to get a picture of the "whole child."

In most cases, your school district will be able to conduct your child's entire evaluation within the district. In a few cases, a school district may not have the staff to do all of the evaluations needed. These districts will have to hire or contract with outside people or agencies to do some or all of the evaluation. If your child is evaluated outside the school, the school must make the arrangements at no cost to you. The school will inform you in writing exactly what type of testing is to be done. Evaluations done at the recommendation of the ARC are done at no cost to parents.

The total amount of time from the date the school receives your written consent to evaluate your child until the date the individual education program is started cannot exceed sixty (60) school days. When the evaluation is completed, you will receive a written invitation to an ARC meeting to discuss the results of the evaluation. As a member of the ARC, you and other members of the ARC should have access to the evaluation information to be used for making educational decisions prior to the ARC

meeting. Ask to obtain your copy of the evaluation report before the ARC meeting. You have the right to have the results of your child's evaluation explained to you. You may ask any questions you have in order for you to fully understand the results and help make decisions for your child.

**If you do not understand the evaluation, you cannot give informed consent. Parents must know what the evaluation results mean to make good decisions about their child's identification and the IEP.**

## Eligibility

If the ARC, with parents as members, decides your child is eligible--which means that your child has a disability and needs specially designed instruction (SDI) and related services-- you will be given a written notice explaining that decision. The ARC must develop a written IEP. The ARC uses the full and individual evaluation results to determine if a child is eligible under the IDEA. The school district will do its best to have you take part in all decisions about your child. This includes asking you to attend the ARC meeting to discuss the results of the evaluation and to decide if your child is eligible under the IDEA.

## Development of the Individual Education Plan

### What is an IEP?

When your child is determined to be eligible for special education services, an Individual Education Program (IEP) is written. The IEP is a plan developed by the ARC to identify the services and supports necessary for a child to be successful in school. It is a written agreement between parents and the school of what constitutes FAPE for the child, which is required by IDEA.

If the ARC decides that your child has an educational disability and needs SDI and related services, the ARC will develop an IEP for your child. An IEP is a written plan of action describing the specially designed instruction and related services needed to meet the individual educational needs of your child. The district is obligated to provide a FAPE for all children with disabilities. Remember, you should always be given the opportunity to be a part of the ARC process that plans and reviews the IEP. The ARC should include you, your child (when appropriate), staff from the school district and other people invited by you or the school. The district will want to ensure you are able to fully participate by arranging for an interpreter or a translator if needed.

### Placement

After the IEP is written, the ARC will decide how the IEP will be implemented. The ARC will consider what the least restrictive environment (LRE) is for your child based on his/her IEP. This is called placement. Remember, the LRE is not the same for every

child. Your child has the right to receive instruction and to take part in school activities in the LRE. This means that, as much as possible, your child has a right to participate in school programs and activities with children who do not have disabilities.

The KEY questions in determining the least restrictive environment are:

- What does the IEP say your child needs?
- Where can your child receive the programming he/she needs and can this be with other children who do not have disabilities? If not, why?

The ARC will consider a variety of educational settings where your child could receive specially designed instruction and related services, but the first place considered is always general education classes.

Where your child receives educational services depends on the kind of support he/she needs. Some children with disabilities will receive educational services in general education classes in regular schools, while other children may receive educational services in separate special education classes or schools.

## Implementation

Once you have given written permission for placement, your child will begin to receive specially designed instruction and related services based on the IEP. Qualified teachers and related service providers will provide the instruction and services stated in the IEP. "Qualified" means that the individuals are certified or licensed by the state to perform the services. Specific names of IEP implementers are not written on the IEP; only the titles of the persons who will be providing the service(s) (e.g. teacher of special education, teacher of general education, OT, PT) are listed.

Implementers are responsible for providing instructional activities to help your child achieve the goals stated in the IEP. Implementers are also responsible for keeping records and reporting on how your child is progressing during the year. These records show that services were provided and how your child progressed toward reaching goals and objectives. These records also are used to make decisions at the annual ARC meeting when the IEP is reviewed.

## Review

Federal and state regulations require the ARC to periodically review your child's IEP.

This ARC meeting must be held at least once per year to determine if annual goals have been met. This review is called the annual review.

Even though an ARC meeting must be held at least once a year to review your child's IEP and placement, you or any member of the ARC may request a review at any time, should a new issue arise. The parent may request an ARC meeting to discuss issues/questions regarding the evaluation, eligibility, IEP, or placement. The parent may call the school counselor, special education teacher, or principal to arrange the meeting.



When it is time for the annual review of your child's IEP, the school district will notify you in writing about the ARC meeting. The ARC reviews your child's IEP and recorded data kept by teachers and related service providers to decide if goals have been met. The ARC also must decide if your child still needs specially designed instruction and related services. If services are still needed, the ARC reviews your child's IEP, revises it if necessary and decides where services will be provided.

Regulations also require the school district to re-evaluate your child on or before the third anniversary of the meeting when the ARC determined your child eligible for specially designed instruction and related services. You or any ARC member may ask for a re-evaluation sooner than every three (3) years, but not more often than once a year unless agreed upon by the parent and local district, under the 2004 IDEA Reauthorization.

## Components of the IEP

The IEP form is broken into several sections, and discussion of each section provides an agenda of topics to be addressed at the meeting. After members of the ARC have discussed each topic, the information is added to the form. The team may come with draft information written, but anything can be added or changed as the team discusses each section. The components of the IEP and the information they include are as follows:

- Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP) – information from the evaluation or from prior IEP data and from observation must be retrieved to address your child's strengths, areas of need, current level of functioning, and how the disability may impact his/her involvement in and progress in the general curriculum. If your child is in preschool, the IEP will state how the disability affects participation in appropriate preschool activities.
- Special Factors – This is a list of factors that fundamentally affect a child's educational performance. The team should consider and discuss how these factors will be addressed if they are pertinent to the child's needs related to school performance. Special factors include:
  - ü Behavior
  - ü Limited English proficiency
  - ü Visual impairment
  - ü Communication
  - ü Assistive Technology
  - ü Extended School Year Services
- Measurable annual goals – goals developed to address each of the significant needs identified in the PLEP. These goals, derived from PLEP statements, are goals that your child should reasonably accomplish in one school year. Goals should be written according to your child's current level of functioning as the measurable starting point and identify where the child will be functioning after one school year.



There must be a description of how the district is going to measure progress on the goals.

- Special education – specially designed instruction (SDI) and related services must be stated in the IEP. SDI means changing and/or adapting the content or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of your child and make sure your child has access to the general curriculum. This includes stating the supplementary aids and services, modification to the program, and supports for personnel that will be provided to assist your child.

### **Educationally Relevant**

When a child has related services on his/her IEP, the goal is to enable that child to benefit from special education services in order to ensure FAPE. Related services should be educationally relevant, meaning that they ensure that the child benefit from services. There are some factors to consider with educational relevance: educational program, eligibility, present levels of performance, and skill levels. The goal of the services is to enable a child to complete instructional activities and to make the child independent in the educational environment.

- Related services – all related services included on the IEP should be accompanied by a designation of the amount of time per week/month the child will be receiving the services and where the services will take place. Related services can include: speech-language pathology and audiology services; psychological services; physical and occupational therapy; counseling services; orientation and mobility services; transportation; and other services. The related service personnel should be included in the development of the IEP.
- Participation with non-disabled children – this identifies the least restrictive environment (LRE) for your child to receive his/her educational program.

If the district representative/placement specialist states that he/she is unable to commit resources during the meeting, the ARC may have to reconvene another meeting when he/she can commit resources.

Autism Speaks offers a School Tool Kit to provide information about autism -- the features, challenges and strengths -- as well as some of the tools and strategies that may result in more positive interactions for all members of a school community.

[http://www.autismspeaks.org/community/family\\_services/school\\_kit.php](http://www.autismspeaks.org/community/family_services/school_kit.php)

## Accommodations vs. Modifications

Accommodations refer to "whatever it takes" to make sure that a child with a disability can participate as fully as possible in the general education curriculum and achieve the academic content standards. Accommodations are changes in the way that material is presented (for example, a child may listen to a reading passage on tape instead of reading it) or in the way a student responds to the material (a student may dictate their responses to questions instead of writing them), as well as changes in setting, timing, and scheduling.

Accommodations involve many kinds of techniques, strategies, and support systems. They help students work around limitations related to their disability. An accommodation refers to "how" the general education curriculum will be presented to the student with disabilities so that he can understand the general education curriculum.

Accommodations may include:

- Visual schedules
- Scribe
- Note-taker/assistive technology
- Calculator
- Sensory regulation items
- Paraphrase
- Visual organizers
- Reader
- Supplemental aids and services

Modifications are changes that can be made to "what" students are expected to learn. For most students with disabilities, modifications should be considered only after all types of accommodations have been exhausted. Modifications involve partial completion of program or course requirements. When determining a modification, the IEP team should ask the following question: "What part of the curriculum does this child need to know that will help them in their adult life?" Because the purpose of special education services is to prepare children with disabilities for further education, employment, and independent living...that is, for life as adults.

**Participation in state and district-wide tests** – Individual accommodations and modifications that will be provided for your child to participate in state and district-wide assessment must be stated on the IEP. There are three ways that children can participate in assessment:

- § Take the test without accommodations
- § Take the test with allowable accommodations that are provided daily in the general education classroom
- § Take an alternate assessment as determined by the ARC

**Dates and places** – A statement of when the services and modifications will begin, how often they will be provided, where they will be provided, and how long they will last.

**Transition service needs** – The ARC identifies a set of activities that promote movement from:

- § preschool to school
- § school to school
- § school to post secondary education
- § vocational training
- § integrated or supported employment
- § continuing adult education
- § adult services
- § independent living
- § community experiences and participation.

If the child is 16 years or older, the IEP transition service statement will focus on the child's course of study. The purpose of the transition plan is to assist students with disabilities in becoming independent adults, making a smooth transition from school to competitive employment and/or postsecondary education, independent living, and community involvement.

**Measuring and reporting your child's progress** – A statement of how often you will be informed (at least as often as students without disabilities) and how you will be informed of his/her progress.

The IEP concludes with the signatures of all participants. Your signature does not indicate that you agree or disagree with the IEP, but that you attended the meeting.

The format of the IEP document is designed specifically to guide a step-by-step process of development with each section building on the previous section. It is important to remember that the information listed in the PLEP must be accurate in order for the team to write appropriate measurable goals. When written properly, the IEP documents the provision of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE).

### **Helpful Hints for Preparing for the IEP Meeting**

- Talk to a parent mentor or an advocate before the meeting. They can give you suggestions on how to work effectively with the team at the meeting and explain your rights under IDEA.
- Familiarize yourself with educational jargon and acronyms; ask for clarification of any you don't fully understand.

- Ask for and review evaluation and present levels of educational performance (PLEP) data before the IEP conference. Ask the school for clarification of anything you do not understand. If necessary, meet with evaluator/teacher before meeting to discuss.
- Before the meeting, write down your priorities and questions.
- Make an agenda for the IEP meeting to guide the discussion of the points you want to cover.
- Tell the school who you will bring to the meeting and ask who will attend from the school. This information should be on the meeting notice. As a courtesy, inform the school as soon as you know of a new participant; surprise guests are usually not appreciated.
- Gather information you want to share, including medical or other assessments. If possible, disseminate this information to participants prior to meeting.
- Bring a friend to the meeting to help in taking notes and clarifying information that is discussed.
- Let the school know if the meeting time or location does not work for you. Offer alternative suggestions in writing to the school.
- Ask the question "How is this going to help my child?" This will help focus the discussion of services and supports being considered.

### **IEP Questions to Consider**

- Are my child's goals measurable? That is, does the IEP state his/her level of functioning now so that it can be compared to his/her functioning in the future to determine how much progress has been made?
- Does the IEP identify the modifications, accommodations, and other supports my child needs to succeed?
- Does the IEP identify who will provide what service and how much time will be spent on those goals?
- How do you measure where my child is currently performing now?
- Are we setting reasonable and realistic expectations of progress for my child?
- How often will my child's IEP goals be reviewed and how often will we meet to review progress?

## Navigating Rough Waters

### When You Disagree with the School District's Decisions

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) values the input of parents regarding their child's education. It provides for actions parents can take when they disagree with school district personnel about their child's educational program. The following are options parents have:

- 1. Request a case conference** – This is a meeting with school personnel to discuss concerns and explore how to resolve the issues.
- 2. Request an administrative review** – This is a meeting that will include the district superintendent or designee to review the issues of disagreement. This person is able to reverse the decision of school personnel.
- 3. Request mediation** – This occurs when parents and schools cannot agree after both the case conference and administrative review. You and the school must both agree to mediation. A trained, qualified and impartial representative hired by the Kentucky Department of Education will be assigned to conduct the mediation between you and the school district representatives. A mediation time that you, the mediator, and the school district representatives agree upon will be scheduled.
- 4. File for an impartial due process hearing** – This is a formal, administrative procedure that is held to resolve disagreements between the parents and the school district. The district will contact the Kentucky Department of Education and a list of potential impartial hearing officers will be sent to the district. In Kentucky, all hearing officers must be attorneys and all hearing officers must have completed training on the process through the Kentucky Department of Education. Parents and the school have to agree upon a hearing officer to hear the case.

### Complaint Process

Parents may also file an official complaint with the Kentucky Department of Education. This is an official notice that a school district may have violated one or more of the federal or state special education laws. Complaints must be about students, or groups of students who are eligible or thought-to-be eligible for special education services.

This does not require a hearing officer. The complaint is reviewed by staff of the Kentucky Department of Education who investigates the complaint by talking with both the parent and the school districts to establish the facts of the case. An official decision is made regarding the complaint and the parent and the school district are informed in writing of the decision of the Kentucky Department of Education. If the district is found in violation of federal or state law, the district is required to correct the violation.

Complaints must be made in writing and sent to the Kentucky Department of Education, Division of Exceptional Child Services (DECS), 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Capital Plaza Tower, 500 Mero Street, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601.

## Types of Disagreements

### **School district denies the request to perform a multi-factored evaluation (MFE)-**

In order for a child to be eligible for special education services, the child must meet two conditions. The child must:

- Have a disability under one of the 13 IDEA categories
- The disability must have a documented adverse affect on the child's educational program

If the school does not observe an adverse affect on the child's educational performance based upon educational data, the school may refuse to perform an evaluation when parents request one.

If the school district refuses to perform an MFE, it must provide the parents with a *prior written notice* letter. The letter must contain information regarding why the evaluation will not be provided and what documentation was used to determine that an evaluation is not needed.

In response the parents may do one of the following:

- Request a mediation with an Kentucky Department of Education-appointed mediator to review the issues of disagreement and make a decision
- File a complaint with the Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children.

**School district determines that the child is not eligible for special education services after the MFE is performed-**If this happens, parents can refuse to agree with the results of the MFE and request an *independent educational evaluation* at public expense. A request for an independent evaluation should be made in writing.

The district can agree to provide for an independent educational evaluation and provide parents with a list of approved evaluators that parents can use at the school's expense. Parents may choose an evaluator from the list or choose someone else.

For a publicly funded evaluation, the school must agree to the evaluator that the parent chooses. IDEA requires that the school agree to the location of the evaluation and the qualifications of the examiner (they must be the same as the criteria for evaluators that the district uses (such as a licensed psychologist).

The school district can initiate a due process hearing to show that its first evaluation is appropriate and, therefore, deny the independent educational evaluation. In this case, a hearing is scheduled before a hearing officer while the school presents evidence to support its position and the parents do the same. The hearing officer then decides if the school must provide for an independent educational evaluation.

Any time a district refuses the independent evaluation at the school's expense, parents have the option of obtaining an independent evaluation at their own expense. When the parents receive the results of any independent educational evaluation, they must request a case conference in writing with school district personnel to consider (and discuss) the results of the evaluation. At this meeting, parents are requesting school district personnel to review any decisions related to the child's eligibility or educational programming based on the new information provided.

**If parents and the school district disagree after a review of the independent evaluation results-**If you and the district cannot come to an agreement about how to address your child's needs, parents can file for an impartial due process hearing, as described in option number 4 above.

**The IEP is not appropriate or is not being implemented appropriately-**If this is the case, request in writing a review of your child's Individual Educational Program with the team and identify your concerns. At this meeting the team can address your concerns and make revisions to the IEP, if appropriate, or identify additional areas of assessment and programming needed to address your concerns.

In addition, IDEA funds parent training and information centers in every state and territory specifically to answer parents' questions about special education issues and provide training to give parents the information they need to advocate for their child's educational interests.

## Section 504

If you do not want to pursue a due process hearing to challenge the school district's decision about your child's eligibility for special education services, another mechanism is available to obtain accommodations for your child. When a child has an identified disability that does not meet the criteria under one of the 13 IDEA categories or that does not adversely affect the child's educational performance, parents can request that the district provide the child with a 504 Plan. This may be the case for children with Asperger Syndrome.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is a broad civil rights statute that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. It states that no person with a disability can be, by reason of his or her disability, denied access to or excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of a public program or service.

Upon request, a 504 Plan is developed to provide the accommodations necessary for the individual with a disability to access an identified service or program. Each local district is required to identify procedures to implement the requirements of Section 504. A district is also required to identify individual(s) responsible for the coordination of Section 504 services. Ask for information regarding your district's procedures for compliance with Section 504.



## The Importance of Knowing Your Educational Rights

It is important to approach the educational planning for your child with the school team from a positive perspective. Be open to ideas and solutions as long as they meet your child's needs. Still, understand that you have the right under IDEA to question the school district's decisions and that there are procedural safeguards written into the law to help you protect your child's right to a free and appropriate public education.

Several resources are available to help parents understand their rights regarding the education of their child. The KY PIRC, the Autism Society of Kentucky, and other local autism groups provide parent trainings on educational rights on a regular basis. These groups also offer assistance to families by phone and through their websites. There are many websites available that also provide information for parents on advocating for their child's educational rights.

(Information adapted from materials developed by the Kentucky Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities, Marion, Kentucky. Used with permission).

## Glossary of Terms

**Admissions and Release Committee Meeting (ARC)** - The ARC is made up of the parent, child (if appropriate), regular education teacher, special education teacher, administrator or designee and others as appropriate. This group is responsible for identification, evaluation, placement and developing, reviewing, or revising an individual Education Program for a child with a disability.

**Alternate Assessment (Portfolio)** - The alternative assessment is an option for children who have the cognitive inability to complete a regular course of study leading to a traditional diploma.

**Assistive Technology Device** - any piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially, off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

**Assistive Technology Service** - is any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an AT device.

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** - public education provided at no cost to the parent, and in accordance with an Individual Education Program.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** - The federal law that requires states to provide children with disabilities a free appropriate public education that modifies and extends the Education for all Handicapped Children's Act.

**Individualized Educational Program** - A written plan of action which includes a student's present levels of performance; annual goals directly related to each area of need; short-term instructional objectives; all necessary specially designed instruction and related services; transition services; extent of participation in regular education; dates for initiation and anticipated duration of services; amount of time child shall spend receiving each service; evaluation procedures; implementers or persons responsible.

**Related Services** - transportation and such developmental, corrective, or supportive services required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. For example, speech therapy is considered a related service.

**Least Restrictive Environment** - The educational setting in which the child with a disability can learn effectively, based upon unique needs and capabilities.

**Present level of Performance (PLOP)** - the first component of the IEP that describes the current performance level, abilities, and disabilities of a child with a disability.

**Referral** - written information about a student suspected of having a disability that may include: personally identifiable data; a description of the areas of concern; an appropriate instruction; support services and interventions provided for any area of concern that adversely affects educational performance.

**School Records** - (cumulative and other available records) are documents and other written information directly related to a child, which are collected, maintained or used by the school district to make IEP decisions.

**Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)** - adapting, as appropriate, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child with a disability and to ensure access to the general curriculum.

**Transitions** - a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed within an outcome-oriented process, promotes movement from school to post-school activities, and is based on the student's needs.