



# Special Education Resources

Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) has put together this list of educational materials to help parents advocate for their children with disabilities.

To find the resources listed under each topic, please visit our website at:  
[www.cpacinc.org/educational\\_materials](http://www.cpacinc.org/educational_materials).

Hard copies of any of the resources in this publication are available upon request by contacting CPAC at 1-800-445-2722 or [cpac@cpacinc.org](mailto:cpac@cpacinc.org).

## Special Education Basics

Special education laws, processes and jargon can be overwhelming, but the best way to advocate for your child is to familiarize yourself with these laws, procedures and language so that you can ensure that your child is receiving an appropriate education.

### ***A Parent's Guide to Special Education in CT***

This publication, from the CT State Department of Education, provides a clear explanation of the laws, regulations and policies affecting special education programs and services. This is definitely a document to bookmark on your computer or keep on your bookshelf.

### ***A Guide to Educational Terms***

All of the terms that you're likely to hear throughout the course of your child's special education are explained in this booklet. From A-Z, this booklet decodes acronyms and offers clear definitions.

### ***IEP Checklist for Parents***

Developed by the National Center for Learning Disabilities, this checklist can be used to determine if your child's IEP contains all of the components required by IDEA.

### **Quick Fact**

*The school is required to send you a copy of your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) within five school days after a Planning and Placement (PPT) meeting is held to develop or revise your child's IEP.*

## Communicating With Your Child's School

While understanding the laws and language of special education is important in advocating for your child, understanding how to communicate effectively with your child's school is equally as important. You are the expert on your child so it is important to learn ways to communicate your desires for your child without letting your passion or emotions cloud your message.

### ***Steps to Success: Communicating With Your Child's School***

Developed by CADRE (Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education) and funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, this document offers a simple and practical, step by step guide for clear, effective communication.

### ***Before, During and After the PPT***

This fact sheet, created by the Connecticut Parent Work Group and Connecticut Department of Education, offers tips for parents before, during and after their children's Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings to make the meetings as effective and productive as possible.



***Education is a shared commitment between dedicated teachers, motivated students and enthusiastic parents with high expectations.***

*- Bob Beuprez*

## **Encouraging High Expectations**

When families and schools hold high expectations for students, students achieve more. This is true for all students, including those with disabilities. Each child has strengths and weaknesses. Having high expectations means believing your child can learn and grow and knowing there are ways to work around areas of weakness.

### ***Encouraging High Expectations***

This list of 12 tips for encouraging high expectations can help parents communicate their expectations with the school team and stay focused on the belief that their children can succeed.

### ***Universal Design for Learning***

All students deserve equal opportunities to learn. One way teachers can provide opportunities is by using Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL provides a flexible plan for creating instructional goals, methods, materials and assessments which helps all students, with and without disabilities, to access participate in, and progress in the general curriculum. Check out the *National Center for Learning Disabilities: A Parent's Guide to Universal Design for Learning* for more information about what UDL looks like and how it can be incorporated into your child's classroom.

### ***Why Common Core?***

The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. This video from the New York State Department of Education explains what the standards mean and how they can prepare students for the future.

#### **Quick Fact**

***IEP goals should be SMART:***  
***Specific***  
***Measurable***  
***Action Based***  
***Realistic***  
***Time-Defined***

## **The Importance of Reading**

Reading is a life-long skill that is necessary for success in our society and yet many students with and without disabilities have difficulty learning to read. Recently, tremendous attention and research have been devoted toward finding out what works in teaching children to read. The National Reading Panel has found that effective reading instruction focuses on developing skills in these five areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and oral reading (or fluency). These five areas are now known as the 5 Building Blocks of Reading.

### ***Questions Parents Can Ask About Reading Improvement***

Parents of children with disabilities who are receiving special education reading instruction need information to participate in writing the IEP (Individualized Education Program) and in working with their children at home. This list of questions to ask your children's teachers can help you gather the information you need.



### ***Assessing Reading Skills***

This short video, produced by Reading Rockets, explains the different parts of reading and how they are assessed. It is important to understand the areas of reading that your child is struggling in order to design targeted instruction based on his/her unique needs.

### ***Words About Reading That You Might Hear at an IEP Meeting***

*Words About Reading That You Might Hear at an IEP Meeting* explains the terms often used to describe a student's reading skills. It is important for families to understand and be familiar with these terms so they can participate in discussions and program planning regarding their children's reading goals and progress.

## Understanding Challenging Behavior

Some students with disabilities may have challenging behaviors. It is important to learn how to understand what the behavior is communicating and ways to address this behavior other than punishment. The organizations listed below offer a vast amount of information on both understanding behavior, ways to prevent challenging behavior and how to address it when it occurs.

### ***Positive Solutions for Families: Eight Practical Tips for Parents of Young Children with Challenging Behavior***

TACSEI, the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children, published this brochure by Matt Timm and Jill Giacomini to provide evidence-based, effective strategies centered on what a child is communicating that parents can use to create positive solutions for families.

### ***Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL): What Works Briefs***

"What Works Briefs" are a series of short, easy-to-read, how-to information packets which promote practices that support young children's social and emotional development and prevent challenging behaviors. They offer a variety of evidence-based practices, strategies and interventions and are designed for parents and early childhood professionals for home and school settings. Although these are designed for parents of young children, there is a great deal of information that may be helpful to families of students with disabilities of all ages.



#### **Quick Fact**

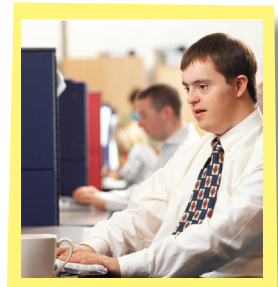
*In Connecticut, removal from a classroom for longer than 90 minutes is considered a suspension.*

## The Transition Process From School To Adult Life

At the high school level, transition is planning ahead for the future by preparing the student to enter the adult world successfully. It is also a federal mandate under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the school, family, student, and outside resources should be involved in the planning process.

### ***Building a Bridge: A Transition Manual for Students***

"Building a Bridge" is a handbook for students and family members to help with preparation for life after school that was developed by the CT Transition Task Force. The



manual is divided into five steps: Getting to Know Yourself, Learn to Self-Advocate, Transition Assessment, Develop Your "Individualized" Program, and Record Keeping. While the manual is meant to help students and families assess a student's needs and skills in order to develop an appropriate plan for the future, it also provides information about the legal requirements regarding secondary transition as well as resources that are helpful in the transition process and in adult life.

### ***Self-Determination: Supporting Successful Transition***

Students who are self-determined have a greater chance of success when making the transition to adulthood, including employment, further education, and independence. This document, developed by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), explains what exactly self-determination means, why it is important, how it is learned, as well as tips for promoting self-determination in youth with disabilities.

### ***How Parents Can Help with Transition***

Planning for your child's future is important. As your child gets older, he or she should be given the skills and a plan to reach future goals. This fact sheet offers ideas on ways that parents can help make the transition to adult life easier for their child with a disability.

## Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology (AT) is any item, piece of equipment or product system that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. View the resources below for information about how assistive technology can be included in your child's IEP and how AT can be used outside of school and into adult life.

### **Assistive Technology and the IEP**

This document from the Family Center on Technology and Disability describes how to determine a child's AT needs and how to work with the school to include them on a child's IEP.

### **A Family Guide to Assistive Technology in Connecticut**

The Family Guide to Assistive Technology offers answers to frequently asked questions about AT in CT. The guide provides information about the basics of AT, including what AT is and how it can help. It covers AT ownership and use of devices purchased by the school system or CT Birth to Three System, and what to do when the school team disagrees about AT device needs.

### **Assistive Technology: Checklist of Questions to Ask Colleges**

AT can help people with disabilities throughout the lifespan. This document from the National Center for Learning Disabilities offers helpful questions about AT policies and programs for students with disabilities to ask colleges as they begin their college search.

#### **Quick Fact**

*Parents cannot be required to pay out of pocket or use private insurance to pay for devices and services that are part of a child's IEP, especially if they would suffer a financial loss as a result.*

## Bullying and School Climate

As a parent of a child with a disability, it is important to know how bullying is addressed in schools as children with disabilities are three to five times more at risk for being targets of bullies. Federal and state laws, as well as local school policies, exist to create safe school climates for all students.

### **Bullies and Victims: Information for Parents**

This resource from the National Association of School Psychologists offers information about bullying as well as information about warning signs that your child is being bullied or that your child is bullying others. It also offers some ideas on how to help eliminate bullying. This basic information is a great starting point for parents who are beginning to worry about whether bullying is a part of their children's lives.



### **The Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Bullying**

Did you know that your child's IEP can include goals, benchmarks or short-term objectives, and identify supplementary aids and services or program modifications and supports to help prevent and intervene against bullying? This document from PACER Center provides examples of how these can be effectively included in the IEP to address bullying.

### **Walk A Mile In Their Shoes: Bullying and the Child with Special Needs**

Developed by AbilityPath.org, this guide for parents and teachers focuses exclusively on bullying of students with disabilities. It describes the signs of bullying (including cyberbullying), offers information on how to educate children about bullying, and explains how a child's IEP can be a helpful tool in bullying prevention. The guide includes toolkits on topics such as steps parents can take to protect their children with special needs, tips to protect a child online, strategies to help children make friends, and bullying prevention in the classroom.

## Some words of encouragement and advice from CPAC staff who have been in your shoes...



*You know your child better than anyone else.*  
-Carmina

*Keep an open mind. Sometimes the best solutions are a combination of ideas.*  
- Robin



*Many parents look back and wish they did things differently. Don't beat yourself up. It's never too late to start advocating for your child.*  
- Sally

*Parents take the long view on their children's education. Help the school team to see that vision.*  
- Jane



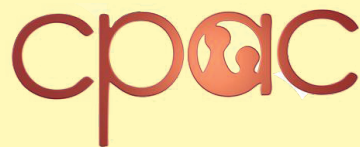
*If you don't understand, ask. If you still don't understand, ask again.*  
-Sherri

**It is important to consider how your decisions and actions today will impact the life of your child in the future.**  
-Beth



*Advocacy is hard work. Find a balance that works for you and your family.*  
-Nancy

# Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center



## Who We Are:

Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Inc. (CPAC) is a statewide nonprofit organization that offers information and support to families of children with any disability or chronic illness, age birth to 26.

The center is a member of a national network of Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) currently operating in all 50 states.

Staffed primarily by parents of children with disabilities, we understand special education law in both theory and practice and offer a unique perspective that combines both empathy and insight.

CPAC is committed to the idea that parents can be the most effective advocates for their children, given the confidence that knowledge and understanding of special education law and its procedures can bring. It is CPAC's mission to support families in their efforts on behalf of their children with disabilities.

## How CPAC Can Help:

**One-on-One Support** - CPAC's Parent Consultants, most of whom are also parents of children with disabilities, work one-on-one with families, primarily over the phone, to answer questions about their children's rights, the special education process, and how to work effectively with the school team to ensure a free and appropriate education for their children.

**Training** - CPAC presents workshops and in-service presentations around the state on various topics related to special education.

**Website** - The CPAC website, [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org), is full of useful information related to special education. Visitors to the site can view fact sheets and publications, discover other resources and organizations that help children with disabilities, sign-up for an e-newsletter, find out about upcoming disability related events in Connecticut, find and borrow books from the multimedia lending library and more!

## Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center

1-800-445-2722 Toll Free

(860) 739-3089

[cpac@cpacinc.org](mailto:cpac@cpacinc.org)

[www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org)

338 Main Street, Niantic, CT 06357

[facebook.com/cpacinc](https://facebook.com/cpacinc)