

Where to Find More Information

The DoDEA Parent's Guide to Special Education includes a list of Internet resources on this topic and many others. The guide can be downloaded at the Department of Defense Education Agency (DoDEA) Special Education Home Page. http://dodea.edu/instruction/curriculum/special_ed/index.htm

Sites Especially for Military Families

For more information about Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), visit www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/efm and click on "EFMP," speak to a Special Needs Coordinator at your local military treatment facility, or visit one of the service-specific Web sites listed in the "For Information and Assistance" section.

Military OneSource - A Master's-degree consultant is available to provide help with concerns related to children with special needs 24 hours a day. Translation services are available in most languages. Call 1-800-655-4545 (in US and overseas). <http://www.militaryonesource.com>

Systematic Training for Military Parents (STOMP) provides information, training, and assistance to military families who have children with disabilities. <http://www.stompproject.org>

Other Important Sites

Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers - Locator to find state parent training and information centers and links to scientifically-based research, national information centers, and IDEA. <http://www.taalliance.org>

National Dissemination Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities - Clearinghouse of information about special education and specific disabilities, summaries of key topics and points of contact in each state. <http://www.nichcy.org>

Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) - <http://www.peatc.org>

IDEA Partnerships

Portal to resources related to IDEA, the law, national technical assistance providers, state/ local organizations and agencies, and the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). <http://www.ideapartnership.org>

U.S. Department of Education - information on special education, parent involvement, education research, laws and regulations. <http://www.ed.gov>

Non-DoD informational references are being provided as required by IDEA but their inclusion in this material does not constitute any endorsement by DoDEA.

DoDEA Special Education Series

The complete series of brochures and other resources for parents of students with disabilities are available on the DoDEA special education website at http://dodea.edu/instruction/curriculum/special_ed/index.htm.

Special Education Brochures

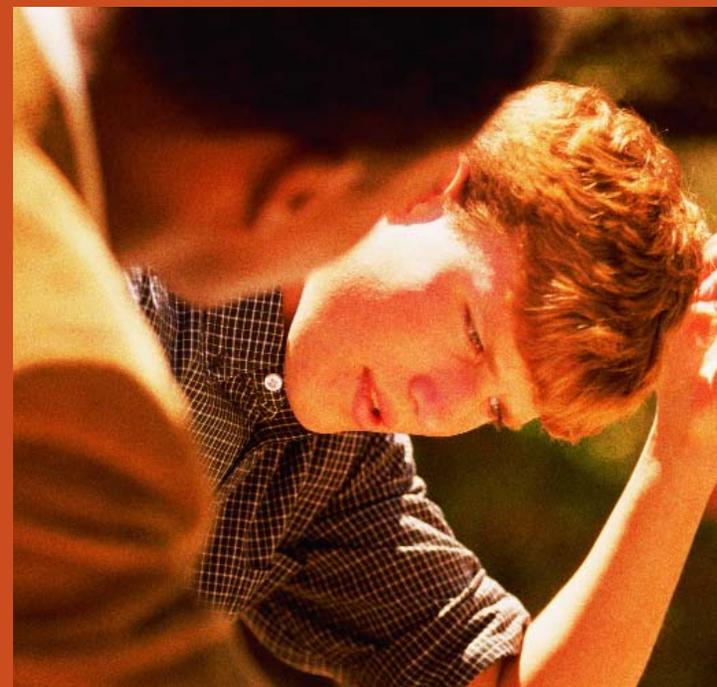
1. Pre-referral Interventions: Steps Before a Special Education Referral/Assessment
2. Moving: Things to Remember When Relocating
3. Communicating Effectively: Building a Strong Partnership
4. Individualized Education Program (IEP): Your Role in the Process
5. Related Services: Understanding the Purpose of these Services
6. Early Intervention Services: Transitioning to Preschool Services for Children with Disabilities
7. Transition: Planning for Life After High School
8. Parent Rights and Responsibilities: Insights into Your Rights and Responsibilities
9. Resolving Disputes: Your Role in Reaching Resolutions
10. Assistive Technology: Assessment, Devices, and Available Services

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Education Directorate/Student Services Branch
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**Communicating
Effectively**
Building a Strong
Relationship

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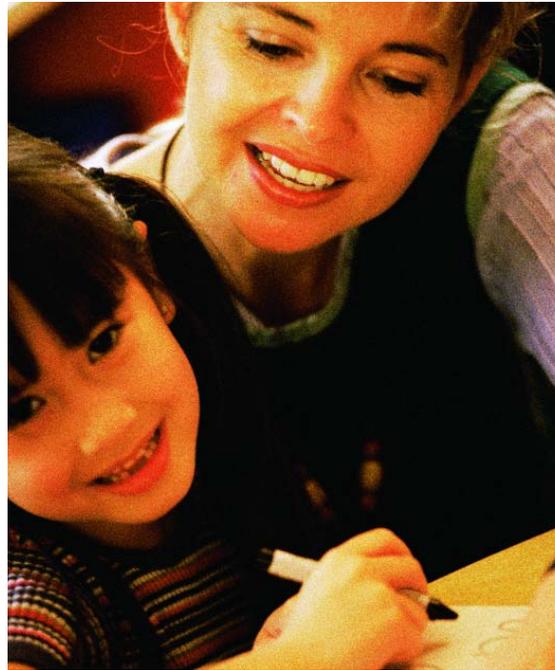
Effective Communication Skills

One of the strongest predictors of success in school for students with disabilities is the active involvement of parents in their education. It is crucial that you build the skills necessary to effectively communicate your child's educational needs. As the parent, you already understand many of your child's strengths and challenges. Learning how to be a good communicator will help you establish strong partnerships with the professionals who serve your child in school, and model for your child how to be an effective advocate.

Preparing for a Meeting

Putting your thoughts down on paper prior to a meeting can help you to be better organized. The time you take to do this will be well spent by helping you to stay focused and get the information you need during discussions about your child's education plan. Here are some pointers to help you prepare for a meeting:

- Write down the purpose of the meeting
- Think about the points you would like to make and jot down some notes
- Clearly define your questions and concerns
- Be specific about what you want for your child
- Say what you want, rather than what you don't want
- Offer a time frame for a reasonable response
- Review what you have written
- Bring your notes to the meeting, and keep a copy for your records
- Have a friend review your notes with you and consider practicing your points before the meeting



Statements read aloud during a meeting and information submitted in writing also can be added to your child's personal file. This will help others reviewing the file later to better understand your perspective.

Listening with Purpose

Sometimes, listening to what individuals are reporting about your child's problems in school may be uncomfortable; however, you can develop skills to keep the lines of communication open. Successful communication begins with active listening. Listening attentively and with an open mind to other's perspectives, experiences, and priorities provides you with a broader understanding of your child's abilities and needs.

A useful strategy to use during conferences is to repeat what was just said. This allows you to clarify a point and ensure that what you heard and

what you think you heard are actually one and the same. Strive for clarification at all times when discussing your child.

Another active listening tool used by skilled communicators is reframing. This requires a bit of practice, but can easily be mastered. To reframe a statement, take a pause and restate the issue in a more positive way. Think about how to restate the problem in a way that does not place blame, and avoid using words like "always" and "never." Reframing can reduce tension during a conference and make the situation more manageable. This helps to ensure the conversation moves continually toward finding positive education solutions for your child.

Building a Strong Partnership

Effective communication brings people together. The most successful partnering ensures that both parties share accurate information and use it in a constructive way. Here are several tips for finding and strengthening partnerships through effective communication, which can make all the difference in helping your child be successful in school:

- Be firm, friendly and fair in stating your concerns.
- Practice repeating and reframing techniques.
- Model trust and respect for your child as well as for the teachers.
- Clarify and articulate your expectations.
- Work to build bridges toward solutions.
- Share your expert knowledge of your child.
- Acknowledge past experiences that may have been difficult.
- Be sure to have a clear understanding of what's in your child's IEP and keep asking questions until you do.