

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>

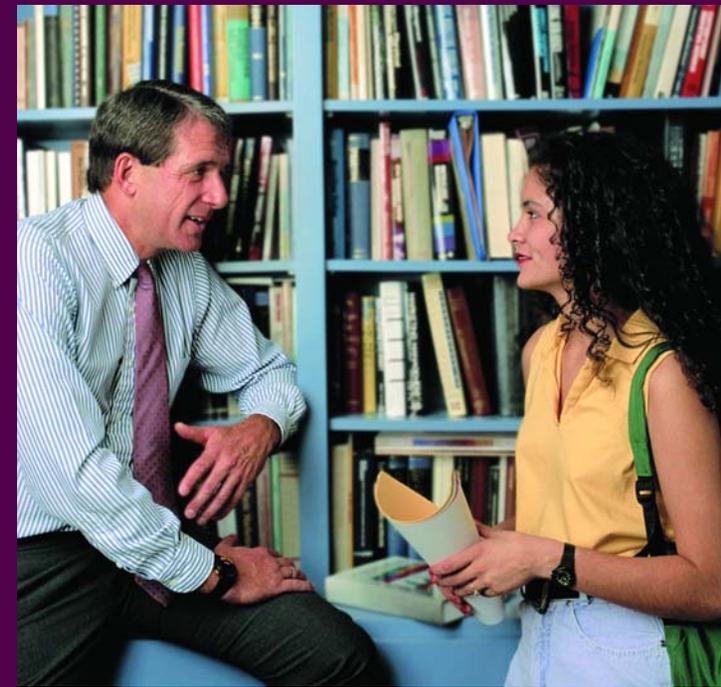
Non-DoD informational references are being provided as required by IDEA but their inclusion in this material does not constitute any endorsement by DoDEA.

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



Resolving Disputes Your Role in Reaching Resolutions

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Education Directorate/Student Services Branch
4040 North Fairfax Drive
Arlington, VA 22203-1635

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Your Role in Resolving Disputes

The special education process can sometimes seem confusing and frustrating for families, especially if it is your first experience with this. DoDEA encourages you to play an active role in the education of your child and to know your rights within the special education process. As an active member of your child's Case Study Committee (CSC), you have a voice in shaping his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP). If at some point you disagree with a recommendation made by a team member, several options exist to help you work effectively with the school to reach a resolution.

The Three-Step Process

You are encouraged to try resolving any differences first through informal meetings and collaborative efforts with your child's teachers or providers. Communicating with the personnel at your child's DoDEA school can promote a positive working relationship and will often eliminate the need to pursue more formal dispute resolution options. Here are the three main steps of the dispute resolution process, from least to most formal:

- 1. Resolution Meeting/Conferencing:** Scheduling conferences with your child's teacher, service providers and school administrator is the first and least formal means of resolving actual or potential disputes you may have with your child's special education program.
- 2. Mediation:** Another voluntary and informal alternative for dispute resolution is entering into mediation. The school will arrange for a qualified, impartial mediator to participate in a meeting between you

and the school personnel to attempt to resolve disputes regarding your child's special education program. The mediator will be appointed by the school at no expense to you, all discussions are confidential.

- 3. Due Process Hearing:** Petitioning the Director of the Defense Office of Hearing and Appeals (DOHA) is the most formal process you have to resolve disputes between you and your child's school. If you find that conferencing and mediation have not resolved your dispute satisfactorily and request a due process hearing, the DOHA Director will appoint a hearing officer to decide your dispute, issuing orders to all parties involved: you, your child, and the school.

Informal Problem Solving

It is often easiest if you can resolve any disputes in the least formal setting. The following strategies can facilitate an early resolution before moving on to the more formal steps of the dispute process.

Organize Your Thoughts. Before going into a conference or mediation, ask yourself questions about the big picture, such as:

- What is my perspective or point of view about the actual or potential dispute?
- How does this dispute affect my child?
- What can be done that will improve the situation?
- How can I clarify the points of agreement and disagreement?

Consider the Other Side's Perspective.

Listen very carefully and try to consider the situation from the teacher's or school's perspective. Give them an opportunity to explain their position and be sure you understand what they are saying. What is causing the school or teacher to take this position? What is getting in the way of resolution?

Reframe the issues. Ask yourself how you can restate the problem in a way that doesn't place blame. How can this issue become more manageable? How can everyone share responsibility and credit for success?

Identify options and opportunities. In preparing to speak with your child's teachers or providers, think about how concerns can be addressed. Are there assumptions that do not seem appropriate in this situation? How can you build upon each other's goals and priorities? What are the anticipated benefits to your child if you work in partnership? Who else needs to be involved in finding solutions?

Where to Find More Information

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

DoDEA Regulation 2500.10 (Dispute Management System) outlines the procedures for dispute resolution: http://www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/2500_10.pdf

The National Center on Dispute Resolution (CADRE) encourages the use of mediation and other collaborative strategies to resolve disagreements: <http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/>