

5 Elements of Successful Advocacy

1. ATTITUDE AND EMOTIONS

- Don't yell. Drop your voice when you feel anger.
- If the other party seems to be acting in good faith, respond in-kind.
- Focus on how to get your partner(s) to do what you think they need to do.
- Never threaten anything you are not fully prepared to carry out successfully.
- Imagine yourself as the advocate for someone else's child.

2. FLEXIBILITY

- Keep an open mind
- Locking down invites resistance.
- Dialogue invites creativity.
- "Model" what partnership looks like.
- You can set a time limit on trying new ideas and then review for success.
- Ask the student what he or she thinks may work.

3. DETERMINATION

- Flexibility in HOW a problem gets solved is not the same as WHETHER it gets solved.
- Not everything is worth going to war on.
- Ask: is this my issue or my child's?
- What if you hear: "We'd love to but we don't have that service."
Response: "Then WE agree then that the service is needed. Tell me how we are going to go about getting it."

4. CREATING A PAPER TRAIL

- Even if you remember what people said, you need to be able to PROVE it.
- Maintain records, letters, correspondence, and notes written at the time events occurred that show what transpired.
- Get organized. Create a workable filing system—one you can keep up.
- Best Practice: You may never need it, but paper provides evidence if needed.
- Document (IN WRITING): important things that happened, requests to the district, your responses and district responses phone calls and replies.
- Send a positive, reasonable, factual written note summarizing phone calls and that creates a record of what transpired.
- Demonstrate:
 - 1) appreciation
 - 2) reason for call
 - 3) disability-related
 - 4) a history of problem

5. KNOWLEDGE

- Help educators understand your child's disability.
- Keep it SHORT. Keep it SIMPLE.
- Create an outline that includes symptoms and the strategies that work.
- Include your expert to help you.
- ASK: what will we do to support the team's understanding so that my child's needs are met?
- Learn about rights and responsibilities in the law: Study. Attend workshops. Use good books.
- Call your local Parent Training and Information Center for assistance and resources.

From DREDF, dredf.org, 2/2/09; Adapted from: Wright's Law www.wrightslaw.com



The contents of this factsheet were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, H328M120025 (PEN), H328M120026 (TEAM), & H328M120027 (PATH). However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, Greg Knollman.



PATH Project: 1-800-866-4726



PEN Project: 1-877-762-1435



TEAM Project: 1-877-832-8945

www.partnerstx.org