

Supporting Families of Students with Disabilities Through Training, Information, and Advocacy

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Equip for Equality Background

- ❖ Private/independent non-profit organization founded in 1985
- ❖ Designated State Protection & Advocacy System
- ❖ Provides legal advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities of all ages throughout the State of Illinois -
 - Self-advocacy advice and resources
 - Legal representation
 - Investigation and monitoring
 - Class action litigation
 - Policy advocacy



P&A System



Source: Rooted in Rights, a program of Disability Rights Washington



Equip for Equality Background



- Three primary teams: Civil Rights, Special Education, and Independent Monitoring Unit
- 69 staff in offices statewide, including 39 attorneys



Special Education Clinic

- Founded in 2007 in response to *The Legal Aid Safety Net*, study of legal needs of low-income Illinoisans
- Provides assistance to over 2,000 individuals annually who connect with EFE through its Special Education Clinic Helpline
- Provides training and outreach to nearly 3,000 individuals annually on special education law and advocacy strategies



Special Education Clinic Resources

- Fact Sheet Library
- Transition and School Discipline training modules/planning tools



Priorities Planning Process

- Triennially, EFE adopts a three-year plan and priorities for its advocacy work
- EFE updates the plan annually with feedback from the community
 - ✓ Legal needs survey
 - ✓ Virtual public meetings
(Register for meeting on June 25, 2024 from 2 - 4 p.m.)



Special Education Clinic Helpline

1-866-KIDS-046 (1-866-543-7046)

special@equipforequality.org

Client Assistance Program

www.equipforequality.org/cap

1-855-ILCAP-25 (855-452-2725)

cap@equipforequality.org

General Helpline

1-800-537-2632

Online Intake Form

<https://www.equipforequality.org/about/contact-us/online-intake-form/>

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WHAT ARE PARENT TRAINING AND INFORMATION CENTERS?

- **Working** with families of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities, birth to 26
- **Helping** parents participate effectively in their children's education and development
- **Partnering** with professionals and policy makers to improve outcomes for all children with disabilities
- **Center for Parent Information & Resources**, <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/the-parent-center-network/>

More on Parent Training and Information Centers:
<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/oseppic/index.html>

Authorized Under Part D of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

- At least once center in each state
- 2 centers in Illinois:

Family Matters

1901 S. 4th St. Suite 209

Effingham, IL 62401

217-347-5428

866-436-7842

www.fmptic.org

Family Resource Center on

Disabilities

11 E. Adams St. Suite 615

Chicago, IL 60603

312-939-3513;

www.frcd.org

The Family Resource Center on Disabilities
serves the Chicago area (the counties of:
Kane, Kendall, Will, DuPage, Lake,
McHenry, Grundy, and Cook).

Family Matters PTIC serves the remaining
94 counties of the state.



Parent Centers are required to:

- Provide training and information that meets the needs of parents of children with disabilities living in the service area, particularly underserved parents and parents of children who may be inappropriately identified;
- Assist parents to understand the availability of, and how to effectively use, procedural safeguards under IDEA, including dispute resolution such as mediation;
- Serve parents of infants, toddlers, and children with the full range of disabilities;

Assist parents to:

- Better understand the nature of their children's disabilities, educational, and developmental needs;
- Communicate effectively with school personnel and early intervention providers;
- Participate in decision making processes and the development of IEP's under Part B and IFSP's under Part C;

- Obtain appropriate information about the range of options, programs, services, and resources available to assist children with disabilities and their families,
- Understand the provisions of IDEA for the education of, and the provision of early intervention services to children with disabilities; and
- Participate in school reform activities

PTIC Partnerships

➤ Parent Centers also network with organizations conducting national dissemination activities:

- * PACER
- * Native Americans
- * STOMP
- * CADRE
- * CPIR
- * Clearinghouse

Optional Activities for Parent Centers:

- Provide information to teachers and other professionals
- Assist students with disabilities to understand their rights and responsibilities on reaching the age of majority
- Assist parents of children with disabilities to be informed participants in the development and implementation of the State's state improvement plan under IDEA

Characteristics of Parent Training & Information Centers

- Private non-profit organizations
- Governed by a board of directors with a membership of which the majority are parents of children with disabilities and includes individuals working in the fields of special education, related services, and early intervention and represents the interests of the people served
- Report annually to the U.S. Department of Education, statistics about the numbers served and outreach to underserved populations.

Services Offered

- Information and referral
- Parent to parent support
- Newsletters
- IEP reviews and consultation
- Toll free help lines
- Websites and links
- Workshops and training
- Lending library

What kind of training?

- IDEA basic rights
- Planning and participating in the IEP process
- Transition from EI to EC
- Transition from school to work or adult services
- Keeping and maintaining student records
- Parent and school collaboration
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Bullying
- Self-Directed IEP's; Self Advocacy
- Conflict Resolution
- Customized trainings by request

How do I find out about trainings?

- FRCD offers regularly scheduled training in their office.
- FMPTIC has trainers who provide workshops in communities and online. FMPTIC provided over 70 webinars on core special education topics last year.
- All will set up trainings to meet your needs if you call their offices.

What do parent centers offer for students who are in the transition process?

- Self advocacy training
- Information about guardianship and futures planning
- Connections to adult service providers
- Information about post secondary education services
- Information about laws that protect you, such as the ADA and the Rehab Act

Common calls and requests received at the PTICs

- “My son’s school district says he needs to graduate this year because he is 18, but I thought he could stay in school until age 22!”
- “My daughter is a junior and I’m worried about what kind of supports she will be able to get when she leaves school. Who will pay for job training?”
- “When should I ask for a transition plan?”

More common calls

- “My school district says that because my son has cognitive disabilities he must go to a special school in another district.”
- “I agreed to a community-based training program on my daughter’s IEP, but now I’m not sure it was the right thing to do because it seems that they just take field trips to Wal-Mart and aren’t really learning any community skills.”

...Common calls continued

- “Does my 3 year old have to go to a special education classroom to get speech therapy services?”
- “How can I prepare for my IEP meeting?”
- “I couldn’t attend an IEP meeting and my school held it without me.”
- “The IEP team told me that my son’s goals are unrealistic and suggested alternatives that I don’t agree with”.

... Common calls continued

- “My son will be staying in school until he is 22, but I would like for him to attend the graduation ceremony with his peers this year. Can he do that?”
- “My vocational program at school is to sweep the cafeteria floors and clean up the tables after lunch periods and I don’t like to do that. Can I have a job in the community?”

... Common calls continued

- “The IEP team said that my son should spend his school time learning independent living skills and vocational skills, but I want him to still learn academic skills; what should I do?”
- “My daughter has learning disabilities and goes to a resource room for help but she isn’t learning to read.”

... Common calls continued

- “My daughter is taking a regular ed Home Ec class and the teacher says that the work has to be modified too much so she shouldn’t be in the class. Is that true?”
- “My son is doing well in a regular ed math class but the district says that students with IEP’s cannot earn a grade above a C in the regular education classes if their work is modified. Is this fair?”

... Common calls continued

- “Does my daughter have to earn all the credits that are required of students in regular education in order to graduate?”
- “My son plans to attend a junior college and they said they need a current evaluation that identifies his disability in order to provide accommodations to him but my district says they aren’t going to do a new evaluation before he graduates. How can I obtain a current evaluation?”

Questions?



For more information contact:

FRCD

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Information Center of Illinois

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Suite 615

Chicago, IL 60603

Phone: (312) 939-3513

Fax: (312) 939-7297

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