

Becoming a Credible Parent

Being the Expert on Your Child

A presentation by
Lana Baugh and Jim Baugh

Becoming a Credible Parent

Credibility in the Education System

Credibility

- Educate Yourself
- Organize Yourself
- Document **EVERYTHING**
- Gaining Self Confidence
- Being Effective

I. Educate Yourself

- Learn the Vocabulary
 - By knowing the professional jargon, you can communicate with professionals in their own language.
- When you don't understand...
 - Ask what they mean. Repeat it back and get confirmation that you've got it.

II. Educate Yourself

- Get All Of The Parent Information You Can Find On Your Child's Conditions.
 - IPUL, NORD, Support Groups
 - Internet
 - Searches, Bulletin boards, List serves
 - Libraries, Books,
 - Your Child's Treating Professionals
 - Take notes or record memos for further research.

III. Educate Yourself

- Get Copies Of Laws And Regulations.
 - IDEA – Federal Regulations (CFR), State Rules, State Implementation Manual
 - §504 Of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973
 - Office for Civil Rights Regulations (CFR)
 - State Laws and Rules
- Highlight the Sections that Apply.

I. Organize Your Self

- Create a File System.
 - Filing Cabinet or just a cardboard file box
- Organize it so it makes sense to you.
- Keep Medical & Educational Evaluations, Reports, Correspondence, Plans.
- Keep a log of meetings, phone calls, conversations.
 - Computer, spiral notebook, binder etc.

II. Organize Your Self

- Keep samples of your child's work.
- Keep progress reports, report cards, tests scores.
- Dates and descriptions of incidents, complaints, problems (These can be in your log or journal).

I. Document EVERYTHING

- Record meetings.
 - Tape or digital recorder
 - Federal rules allow recording of IEP Meetings
- Confirm Important Statements and Decisions.
 - The “Thank You” Confirmation
 - “ just to be sure I understand”

II. Document EVERYTHING

- Elements of a Good Confirmation Letter:
 - The date and occasion of the communication
 - Identify people (Who said what)
 - The content –(what was said)
 - Request for a written correction if they don't agree.
 - Specify times, dates, amounts and frequency of promised services, people responsible.

III. Document EVERYTHING

● **THE CONFIRMATION SENTENCE;**

“If this is not your understanding of our conversation, please notify me in writing of any disagreement in the next ten days. If I do not hear from you, I will assume this is correct.”

I. Self Confidence

- Remember – You know your child better than anyone does.
- Be prepared for every meeting.
- Have your support people attend.
- Bring Documentation and records.
- Bring Laws and Regulations (highlighted).

II. Self Confidence

- You Know Your Child.
 - You have researched his/her condition.
 - You have records and evaluations.
 - You have learned from professionals.
 - You are with her/him every day.
 - You know how he/she responds and communicates.
 - You know what has worked or failed in the past.

III. Self Confidence

- Know that You can express your complaints and requests precisely.
- Know your Rights.
- Be Prepared.
- Know when you have gotten what you need.
- Have documents and records to back you up.

I. Identify the Problem

- Be able to say exactly what needs to be changed and how you want it to be changed
- “this program isn’t working” “Your doing a lousy job” “I want a new teacher” **THESE WON’T CUT IT!**

II. Identify the Problem

- These are Better.
 - “ The materials are too easy, he already knows this material. We need more advanced lesson plans.”
 - “The aide is reinforcing her tantrums in the way she responds. We need to have training, or consultation from a behavior expert.”
 - “The behavior program removes him from the class too much. We need an effective in class strategy using Positive Behavioral Supports.”

III. Identify the Problem

- “The Physical Therapy program is inadequate, she needs at least one hour per week with a registered Physical Therapist.”
- “ The classroom teacher is not running the communication device program. His communication program needs to be integrated into his whole day.”

I. Being Prepared

- Make a list of the issues you want to address and the questions you want answered.
- Know which rules or regulations apply to your problem (remember you have them with you).
- Take notes on the response to each issue.

I. Being Effective

- “Yes” is not enough.
 - An agreement must have these elements to really be a “Yes”:
 - **When** will the change be made, or when will the services start?
 - **HOW MUCH** will he/she receive in terms of hours frequency?
 - **WHO** is responsible for making it happen?
 - **IS THERE A PLAN?** Is it in writing?

II. Being Effective

- If these questions can’t be answered now, when will you get an answer?
- Document all of the details in writing.
- Keep Score. Make a chart of the issues and have a space for “Yes” , “No” “Other”, “When” and “How Much.”

III. Being Effective

- What If the answer is “No”?
 - Always ask “WHY?”
 - Ask for the legal authority they have for saying “No”.
 - Document the answer and the reason given as well as the rules or regulations they rely on for authority –ask for it in writing and confirm it in writing.

IV. Being Effective

- There are different remedies for different problems:
 - §504 Plans –Office for Civil Rights (OCR)
 - ISDE complaints –for policies or practices by schools which violate state or federal laws or rules
 - “Due Process” Hearings –disputes over IEP or any other violations of IDEA
 - These all overlap.

I. Being Credible --Medical

- Educate Yourself
- Organize Yourself
- Keep Good Records
- Gaining Self Confidence
- Being Effective

I. Educate Your Self

- Learn the Vocabulary
 - By knowing the professional jargon, you can communicate with professionals in their own language.
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II. Educate Your Self

- Get All Of The Parent Information You Can Find On Your Child's Conditions.
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I. Organize Yourself

- Keep a file with medical Information.
- Prepare an Emergency Sheet.
- Keep an updated list of Medications including allergies and adverse reactions (can be on the emergency sheet).
- Prepare a Short Medical History.
- Write a set of “Special Instructions”.
- Keep a written log of medical events.

II. Organize Yourself

- Keep a Medical File.
 - Get and keep copies of Medical reports
 - Lab reports, radiology reports, doctors’ notes, hospital stay records

III. Organize Yourself

- Prepare an Emergency Sheet.
 - Medications and allergies and adverse reactions
 - List of medical conditions
 - Instructions for major emergencies
 - List of doctors with phone numbers
 - Contact information for everyone concerned
- Give the sheet to all providers and care givers.

IV. Organize Yourself

- Prepare a Short Medical History.
 - Include all disabling conditions.
 - major surgeries, hospitalizations
 - Include a functional description.
 - Things s/he likes to do – a few sentences to remind them that s/he is a person and not a collection of diagnoses.

V. Organize Yourself

- “Special Instructions”
 - Ways to communicate with him/her
 - Unusual needs like:
 - “Hard to get an IV use a small “butterfly” and avoid vacutainers.”
 - “He is slow to respond but he will answer if you give him time.”
 - “always ask her before you touch her.”

VI. Organize Yourself

- Keep a written log of medical events.
 - Seizures
 - Emergency room visits
 - Asthma attacks
 - Medication changes
 - For some conditions such as seizures, a graph may be useful.

I. Being Effective

- Have a List of Questions for Every Visit.
 - What is happening?
 - What could have caused this?
 - What treatments are available?
 - What are the risks and benefits?
 - Can I get an order for...?
 - What does this lab report mean?
- Take Notes on the Answers.

II. Being Effective

- Try not to show anger or make accusations.
- Listen attentively – Keep eye contact.
- Repeat back to the professional important statements to be sure you understand.
- Ask the meaning of any terms you don't understand.

I. Being a Credible Parent

- These principles will apply to other situations with some modifications.
 - Service providers
 - Evaluators
 - Medicaid
 - Social Security
 - Direct Care staff
 - Insurance companies
 - Equipment vendors
 - Therapists

II. Being a Credible Parent

- If you follow these rules, you will find that professionals and administrators will listen to you and will give you the information you need.
- You will be treated more like an equal and a partner in your child's services.
- Communication will improve.
- Stress is reduced when you can have an influence on important events.