



The Parent Information Center of Delaware

Inform. Educate. Advocate.

EDUCATION CONNECTION



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Mission

Advancing effective parent engagement in education. We are especially focused on supporting parents of children with disabilities and youth self-advocates to assist them in gaining the knowledge and skills to access appropriate special education programs and related services.

About PIC

PIC is home to the Delaware Parent Training and Information Center.

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Age of Majority

Congratulations, you've turned 18!

Turning 18 is significant for any youth, but for a student receiving special education services, it brings with it an additional responsibility. This is the time that a student will discuss with her IEP team the rights she may assume when she turns 18, or what is also known as “the age of majority”.

So what does an IEP team need to do? The IEP team is now charged with determining a student’s capacity to provide informed consent related to education decision-making.

Here are three questions that an IEP team must consider:

- 1) Is the student generally able to understand the basic components of his IEP?
- 2) Can the student use the information provided to make a decision?
- 3) Does the student understand that they can say yes or no?

A student who is determined to **have** capacity may choose to do one of two things:

- 1) The student can choose to assume and exercise her educational rights OR
- 2) The student may voluntarily authorize an adult to become their Educational Representative, a person who will make special education decisions for them.

If, on the other hand, the IEP team finds that a student **lacks** capacity, **the IEP team** will appoint an adult to serve as an Educational Representative. Be assured though, that as a biological or adoptive parent who has always supported your child, you will be given first priority to serving as your child’s Educational

Representative. And for children who do not have a willing and available adult relative able to become their Educational Representative, a protection exists which permits the IEP team to have a trained advocate, called an Educational Surrogate Parent, appointed to the student by the Department of Education.

In Delaware, youth are required to be invited to their IEP meeting by age 14 or as they enter 8th grade. It is never too early, however, for youth to learn about self-advocacy! Here are 5 ways to introduce self-advocacy to a child to help them prepare for their own IEP meeting and consequently, their future:

- 1) Ask your child to explain why a particular subject in school is difficult. Help your child to problem solve two strategies that she can use when she encounters a challenge. Explain a strategy you use at work.
- 2) Have your child visually express 3 of their interests. This can be done using pictures, creating drawings, using software applications or even making power point slides to present at the IEP meeting. Try this yourself and compare!
- 3) Teach your child to ask for help and to help others. Share a story about a time when someone helped you and how you helped someone else.
- 4) In a comfortable setting with family or friends, encourage her to introduce herself and talk about her achievements, frustrations and dreams. You can model and do the same!

For more information and tips: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUszxv-KW-A>

Meet Our Kent/Sussex Counties Staff!



Meet **Larry Ringer**, The Director of Training. Prior to his 2017 retirement and move to Delaware, Larry Ringer worked for nearly 28 years in the United

States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). As an Associate Director of OSEP's Division of Monitoring and State Improvement Planning, Larry led a team responsible for monitoring compliance with federal special education law in fourteen States and Puerto Rico. Prior to coming to OSEP in 1989, Larry worked for 12 years as an attorney in Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota, representing children with disabilities and their families to further their educational rights. Larry received both his Bachelor of Arts and law degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For more information on scheduling or facilitating trainings please contact him at lringer@picofdel.org.

Meet **Christina Andrews** (Tina). Tina previously worked at PIC as a Program Coordinator for the PIRC grant. After her time with PIC, Tina went back to school and got a Masters in Special Education with an autism certification. She worked for 5 years in schools in Delaware and Maryland.

Tina is returning to PIC as a Parent Consultant and her hope is to be able to partner with families to help them find resources and supports to improve their child's educational experiences and, ultimately, their lives. Tina will be working on initiatives throughout the state but her primary focus will be on Sussex County, where she grew up and graduated from Sussex Central High. Tina is excited to work with many of the people she grew up with, as they are now teachers, administrators, and parents in Sussex County. An important focus of Tina's, is to increase PICs visibility in Sussex County, so that more families can benefit from our services. For more information on obtaining services for your student in Sussex County please contact her at andrews@picofdel.org.

Extended School Year Services (ESY)

This is the time of year when a discussion about ESY services is especially important in your IEP meetings. ESY services are special education and related services that are provided to a child beyond the normal school year and are in accordance with the child's IEP. ESY is not to be confused with summer school that may be available to all students. The decision to provide ESY is determined by the child's IEP team which means that as the parent or ESP, you will help to make this decision. Aside from using data from the IEP, consideration must also be given to five factors. The team should ask a question about each of the following areas beginning with, "Without ESY...":

1. Will appropriate and meaningful progress on IEP goals be achieved given the nature or severity of the child's disability?
2. Does the child show a consistent pattern of substantial regression in critical skill areas, and is the time needed to relearn skills so significant that it prevents educational progress?
3. Would the attainment of newly learned skills be significantly jeopardized over the summer break?
4. Would paid employment opportunities (for students aged

16-20) be significantly in danger if training and job coaching are not provided during the summer?

5. Lastly, are there any special or extenuating circumstances that justify the provision of ESY to meet FAPE (Free appropriate public education) requirements?

Remember that ESY services may look different from those delivered during the school year; however, services still need to be based on the needs and goals included in the child's IEP. Transportation to ESY services must be provided by the school district.

So when you reach the section in your IEP team discussions about your child's eligibility for ESY, be sure to fully understand how your child is currently progressing, and think about how your child will progress without ESY services.

Ask questions, share concerns and problem-solve with the IEP team. Be sure you feel comfortable with your level of input and that the team's decision is based on the data collected. For more information: <https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/child-social-situations/summer-camp-summer-school/extended-school-year-services-what-you-need-to-know>

What is Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)?

You may have heard the terms, “RTI” (Response to Intervention) or “PBS” (Positive Behavior Supports) in your child’s school. RTI is an approach that provides continuous and “responsive” academic instruction and interventions for students when needed. Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS or PBS) is a tiered-approach that addresses schoolwide behavior and allows teachers to provide specific behavior interventions for students when needed. Both are schoolwide systems geared to meet the academic, behavior and social needs of all students. This means, the school has a process where they can intervene before a student falls behind either academically (RTI) or behaviorally (PBS). Think of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) as the combination of RTI and PBS – addressing both the academic and behavior needs of students. MTSS is a process of systematically documenting the performance of students as evidence of the need for additional services after making changes in classroom instruction. More importantly, MTSS changes the way schools support students with learning and behavior problems by systematically delivering a range of interventions based on demonstrated levels of need (PBIS, 2018). MTSS is an evidence-based approach that meets the learning needs of all students. It refers to all of the instructional strategies, interventions and other resources that are used to help students achieve (FL MTSS, 2011).



When a school uses MTSS, all students are taught the same content, but some students may receive extra help. A school team reviews your child’s progress with the interventions being applied and uses



this data to determine if more support is needed. Your child does not need to be a student with a disability or receiving special education services to benefit from MTSS.

Here are some ways you can learn more about MTSS and how it impacts your child.

- Ask how MTSS works in your child’s school. Some questions may include: What supports does the school provide? What data are used to decide whether students receive extra support? How can I be kept informed about the support my child will receive?
- Talk to your child’s teacher about your child’s strengths and needs—Check out PIC’s fact sheet **‘Talking with your Child’s Teacher’** for specific tips you can use when sharing information about your child.
- Learn about and use those strategies which have been successful with your child at school, at home.

For more information about MTSS, including state initiatives and resources, visit <http://wh1.oet.udel.edu/pbs/mtss-resources/> or the “Resources” tab/ Behavior at www.picofdel.org

This information was adapted in part from SWIFT Center, IDEAS that Work Publication & MTSS Implementation Components, and the University of South Florida.



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Teaching Your Child How to Identify and Express Emotions

Imagine that you are playing with your 3.5 year-old child and working on putting together toy tracks for your child's new train set. Your child gets frustrated because the track they've chosen doesn't fit. You say to your child "here, let me help you". Your child becomes frustrated and says "no, I'll do it". Your child tries another piece and it doesn't fit. Your child becomes so frustrated that they start throwing the pieces of the train tracks. How would you deal with this? Would you walk away and try putting it together later in the night after your child goes to sleep? Young children deal with the same emotions that we do including: anger, frustration, sadness, happiness, nervousness, and embarrassment. The only difference between them and you is that you are not able to articulate their feelings. Because they have trouble with naming their feelings, they may act in undesirable ways such as "hitting, screaming, temper tantrums, etc."

Parents can help their children understand and express their emotions through a variety of steps including:

- Helping your child to "name" their feelings. For example, using the story above: "The train tracks did not fit. You threw your train tracks because you were mad." Help them to develop a feelings vocabulary using words that they easily understand. It may be helpful to use the word and a visual picture to help them understand what that feeling word might look

like. "feeling words".

- Once you help them to start developing their feelings vocabulary, give them a chance to use it. For example, "I saw that when you were playing with grandpa at the park, you were smiling. Were you happy?" If you've developed a feelings chart, you may also point to the chart to say "You were smiling, how did you feel?" to help them associate the word with the facial expression. You can also practice this by making faces and have your child to tell you how you feel based on the face you are making.

- Teach your children how to respond to others when they express their emotions. For example: "When you stepped on Johnny's foot accidentally, he was crying. What do we do to help him feel better?" You may teach your child to hug Johnny and say "I'm sorry. Are you ok?" Use teaching moments to help them understand how to respond.

In conclusion, children have the same feelings that we do, but often times can't express their feelings verbally and instead display undesirable behavior. It is important that parents maintain their patience and use those displays as "teaching moments" to help them develop their emotional vocabulary.

Adapted from The Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention. More information can be found here: http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/teaching_emotions.pdf.