



PARENTS AS ADVOCATES

The special education evaluation and eligibility process can be confusing, but Early Stages is here to help you, the parent, support your child.

What is an Advocate?

An advocate supports and speaks up for others. As an advocate for your child, you are an important voice for their educational needs.

Tips for Being Your Child's Best Advocate

- **Stay informed.** Staying informed about child development, the special education process, and your rights in this process helps you respond to challenges and be a strong member of your child's team.
- **Keep a positive mindset.** This mindset can help you work well with your child's team, including evaluators, teachers, and service providers.
- **Be curious about your child's development.** Being interested and active in your child's development keeps you aware of their growth and progress in learning.
- **Communicate with your child's team.** You and your child's team are all working together, and good communication is one of the most important parts of that teamwork.
- **Create a support network.** Find a group of parents and other professionals who can give you guidance and emotional support during this process.



What is a Support Network, and Who Should Be Included?



When it comes to the special education process, a support network includes people who know your child well and can:

- Come with you to meetings
- Share areas of expert knowledge
- Offer support and listen when you need to talk
- Help you learn how to help your child

Your support network can include anyone you want, such as:

- Family members or trusted friends
- Religious and spiritual advisors
- Child care providers
- Doctors and other medical care providers
- School staff who know your child well

What Does Advocacy Look Like?

Advocacy can look like:

- Knowing your child's strengths and needs
- Communicating your concerns and questions to school staff
- Sharing your child's successes with your child's community
- Writing down observations about how your child is learning, playing, and developing
- Requesting copies of your child's educational and medical records
- Asking for support from your network
- Requesting translation and interpretation services when you need them



Remember that **you** are an **expert** on your child.
You are your child's **best advocate**.