

RealTalk for Parents: Podcast #3

Snapshot



Welcome to Real Talk for Parents The new Podcast from The Parents Place Maryland. RealTalk will bring you information, education and support because being a parent of a child with Special needs can be challenging. My name is Yvette DeCosta and today we are going to talk about the 10 rules of Advocacy. These are some brief tips of things to think about and come back to later in more detail.

Create a vision, you are the expert on your child and it's your job to help the school see your child just at you do. You know what they like and what they don't like and their long term goals. Sharing this vision with the school is really critical.

Ask Questions, Never be afraid to ask questions about any acronym or terminology that you do not understand. You can always frame it with I want to be an involved member of "Team Billy". And understanding all the terminology associated with the IEP will help the IEP process go a lot smoother. Another tip, **Getting involved**. Volunteer in your child' classroom if you can't volunteer or don't have the time to volunteer in the am or pm. Make friends with the classroom parent. It's really important to have eyes and ears in the class room at times when you can't be there to really know what is going on.

Now our number four tip is a biggie: Document, Document, Document! You will hear the next phrase during any Parents' Place special education presentation, so get used to it. "If it wasn't in writing it didn't happen!" Very critical, it's important to put all requests in writing, send an e-mail about concerns and you can create a paper trail where one doesn't exist. Follow-up those hallway and parking lot conversations with an email confirming your understanding of what was discussed and agreed upon!!It's very important because while things are going well and they may be making changes in the classroom. But if something comes up and there are issues it's important to have a paper trail and it may be necessary to call an IEP meeting to make changes to the IEP to address your concerns.

Another closely related rule is Write it down, meaning your concerns. Write down those key points you want to address while they are fresh in your mind. This goes right back to document, document, document. By being organized this will help you with our next rule: which is, Stay focused you can only focus on one thing at a time. It's important to prioritize your issues with the school because you can only focus on changes one issue at a time. By writing down these issues as they come up and creating an agenda for the meeting or call will help you stay focused, it's really important to Know Your Rights. Dust off those procedural safeguards you gotten at every IEP meeting. This document is full of lots of great information so it's important if you haven't read it recently and they do update these things periodically that you do review it. There's also a lot of information on our website ppmd.org and it's important to attend workshops, listen to our podcasts and watch webinars that are also on ppmd.org.

Were almost done with our 10 rules of Advocacy and this next rule goes right to the heart of the issue! We have to keep our emotions in check! And sometimes this is very challenging because these are our kids and these issues affect us and them in a very serious way. Also, we are our children's case managers we have to keep a certain level of professionalism and distance to make sure we are able to see the big picture. And a lot of times it's important to have other supports there to keep you on track.

And lastly follow the rules. There is a process in Special education, timetables understanding this and getting help to navigate this is exactly what we do here at The Parents' Place of Maryland. And a very important reason to put it in writing when you request an IEP meeting or if you are requesting that your child be evaluated. Once this document is received by the school, that starts that time clock and it's important to understand that putting things in writing starts that process. I want to thank you for listening to this podcast about the 10 tips of Advocacy we look forward to hearing from you if you have any questions e-mail us at info@ppmd.org. And we just want to remind you that it's a marathon not a sprint and we're here to navigate that with you. Here a Realtalk for Parents this is Yvette Decosta see you next time

