

# **Advocacy 101: Children's Rights**

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# Children's Rights

Children's rights are defined in numerous ways, including a wide spectrum of **civil, cultural, economic, social and political rights**. Rights tend to be of **two general types**: those advocating for children as **autonomous persons** under the law and those **placing a claim on society for protection from harms** perpetrated on children because of their **dependency**. These have been labeled as the **right of empowerment** and as the **right to protection**.

- **Provision**: Children have the **right to an adequate standard of living, health care, education and services**, and to **play**. These include a **balanced diet**, a **warm bed** to sleep in, and access to **schooling**.
- **Protection**: Children have the **right to protection** from **abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination**. This includes the right to **safe places** for children to play; **constructive child rearing behavior**, and **acknowledgment of the evolving capacities** of children.
- **Participation**: Children have the **right to participate in communities** and have **programs and services** for themselves. This includes children's **involvement** in libraries and community programs, **youth voice** activities, and involving children as **decision-makers**.
- **Economic, social and cultural rights**, related to the conditions **necessary to meet basic human needs** such as **food, shelter, education, health care**, and **gainful employment**. Included are rights to **education, adequate housing, food, water**, the highest attainable standard of **health**, the **right to work** and **rights at work**, as well as the **cultural rights of minorities and indigenous peoples**.
- **Environmental, cultural and developmental rights**, which are sometimes called "**third generation rights**," and including the **right to live in safe and healthy environments** and that groups of people have the **right to cultural, political, and economic development**. (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

# How do we learn about our children's rights?

- **Attend workshops and trainings.** For example: State Support Team workshops, Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities, Ohio-PIRC (Parent Information Resource Center), and the ARC of Greater Cleveland (Partners In Policymaking).
- **Search for materials, information on the internet.** For example: The Family and Community Resource Center.
- **Serve on committees, boards and councils.** For example: Parent Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children, School Boards, Organizational Boards, State Department (ODMH) committees through the Family and Consumer Partnership Team
- **Become familiar with organizations** which provide information about our children's needs, disabilities or support.
- **Join organizations which are particular to your child's disability.** For example: NAMI, Ohio DD (Developmental Disabilities) Council, Child & Adolescent Bipolar Foundation, Ohio Federation for Children's Mental Health, and KIN and Kids.
- **Ask questions!!!!!!**

# What do you do if you feel your child's rights have been violated?

- **Be calm.**
- **Get the facts.**
- **Document the situation.**
- **Seek out experts.**
- **Ask questions!**
- **Advocate on their behalf for changes.**

# Wright's law

## Do Your Homework

### What Type of Training is Required to Become an Advocate?

by Sue Whitney, Research Editor, Wrightslaw

**I want to be a Special Education Advocate. Do you know what type of training is required for me to advocate for children who have learning disabilities? Is there a certification process?**

### There is No Current Certification for Advocates

There is no regulation or licensing of advocates, so there are no guidelines other than your personal standards of competence. Currently, there is no certification required.

### Here is What You Need to Learn

You will need to:

- be able to read evaluations and write measurable IEP goals based on evaluations and student present levels of performance.
- learn what is in the curriculum standards for each grade/age for your state.
- know about different types of tests and what they measure.
- learn about the disabilities and research based methodologies.
- need to learn the acronyms of special education or field of disability
- know what is in Section 504, ADA (American Disabilities Act), IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), NCLB (No Child Left Behind), FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act), FAPE (Free, Appropriate Public Education), general education and transportation laws.
- know what is available for post secondary options so that you can be sure the student is prepared when he/she gets there.
- know the area resources – schools, evaluators, attorneys, private providers, and other advocates.

# Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy Training

**Wrightslaw** offers a variety of special education law and advocacy programs taught by nationally-recognized experts in the field of special education law and advocacy. **Our goal is to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills to advocate effectively for children with disabilities.**

## **Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy Training**

Wrightslaw multi-media Training Programs on CD-ROM are available 24/7 - wherever you live, whenever you want. Work at your own pace. Eliminate distractions and schedule your study periods at times that meet your needs.

Read all the books you can on the information you need

Go to all the conferences

Keep current on all the information

## **Join the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates**

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA)

Become a member of the COPAA listserv and read all the posts. Over time, you will get an understanding of the difference between good advice and bad advice, a poor resource or a good one.

# Additional Resources:

- **Wrightslaw:** <http://www.wrightslaw.com/>
- **Wrightslaw Yellow Pages for Kids:**  
<http://www.yellowpagesforkids.com/>
- **COPAA (Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates):** <http://copaa.org/>
- **Ohio Department of Education:** <http://www.ode.state.oh.us>
- **Ohio Department of Education-Office for Exceptional Children:**  
<http://www.edresourcesohio.org/>
- **US Department of Education:** <http://www.ed.gov/>
- **State Support Teams:** <http://www.cositpd.org/network.html>
- **Ohio Legal Rights Services:** <http://olrs.ohio.gov/ASP/HomePage.asp>
- **Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities:** [www.ocecd.org](http://www.ocecd.org)
- **Ohio Departments of Job and Family Services:** county level
- **Ohio Federation for Children's Mental Health:** <http://www.ohiofederation.org/>
- **Ohio Department of Mental Health:** <http://www.mh.state.oh.us/>
- **NAMI-Ohio:** <http://www.namiohio.org/>
- **The Family and Community Resource Center:** [www.fcrconline.org](http://www.fcrconline.org)

# Resources:

Read books from the Wrightslaw Store.

Read your state Special Education Regulations.

Order a copy or download a copy online from your State Department of Education.

Read Tests and Measurements for the Parent, Educator, Advocate & Attorney

Read the information posted on these websites:

Wrightslaw : <http://www.wrightslaw.com/>

Ask the Advocate : <http://www.wrightslaw.com/howey/ask.htm>

Doing Your Homework : <http://www.wrightslaw.com/heath/dyh.index.htm>

LD Online : <http://www.ldonline.org/>

Department of Education for your state

US Department of Education

Monitor these websites for conferences

Learning Disabilities Association of America : <http://www.lidaamerica.org/>

International Dyslexia Association : <http://www.interdys.org/>

Association of Specialists in the Assessment of Intellectual Functioning: <http://asaif.net/>

Autism Society of America; <http://www.autism-society.org/site>

Join the state chapters of the national organizations and read the newsletters

Check your state directory of organizations on the Yellow Pages for Kids.

More Resources

This is a good booklist: The Advocates Bookstore : [http://www.wrightslaw.com/bkstore/bks\\_index.htm](http://www.wrightslaw.com/bkstore/bks_index.htm)

Subscribe to all the free education newsletters you come across.

As you do these things you will come across other books and websites that can provide valuable information.

**You'll Know You Are Ready When...**

...you get to the point where a parent comes to you and you know what to do and how to do it.

Then you are ready to work as an advocate. But keep up your reading and education.



## **The Family and Community Resource Center**

***“Renewing the family spirit through educational programs and opportunities across the life span”***

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