WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court ruled unanimously Tuesday for a deaf student who sued his public school system for providing an inadequate education. The case is significant for other disabled students who allege they were failed by school officials.

The case the justices ruled in involves Miguel Luna Perez, who attended public school in Sturgis, Michigan. Perez’s lawyers told the court that for 12 years the school system neglected the boy and lied to his parents about the progress he was making, permanently stunting his ability to communicate.

The justices ruled that after Perez and his family settled a complaint against the school system — with officials agreeing to pay for additional schooling and sign language instruction — they could pursue money damages under a different federal law. Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote in an eight-page opinion for the court that the case “holds consequences not just for Mr. Perez but for a great many children with disabilities and their parents.”

It remains difficult for Perez, who emigrated to the United States from Mexico at age 9, to make himself understood. Perez’s lawyers say the school system failed him by providing an aide who was not trained to work with deaf students, did not know sign language and in later years left him alone for hours at a time. After over a decade, Perez did not know any formal sign language and communicated through invented signs that anyone unfamiliar with his unique signing did not understand, his lawyers have said.

Meanwhile, the school awarded him inflated grades and his parents believed he was on track to earn his high school diploma. Just before graduation, however, his family was told he qualified only for a “certificate of completion.”

His family responded by pursuing claims under two laws: the broad Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits discrimination against disabled people, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The latter guarantees children with disabilities a free public education that is tailored to their specific needs. Perez’s family and the school district ultimately settled the IDEA claims. The district agreed to pay for extra schooling and sign language instruction for Perez and his family, among other things, and he graduated from the Michigan School for the deaf in 2020. After the settlement, the family went to federal court and, under the ADA, sought monetary damages, which are not available under the IDEA.
Lower courts said Perez was barred from pursuing his ADA claims because of language in the IDEA, but the Supreme Court disagreed. Gorsuch wrote: “We clarify that nothing” in the IDEA “bars his way.”

Perez’s lawyer Roman Martinez said in an emailed statement: “We are thrilled with today’s decision. The Court’s ruling vindicates the rights of students with disabilities to obtain full relief when they suffer discrimination. Miguel and his family look forward to pursuing their legal claims under the Americans with Disabilities Act.”

The superintendent of Sturgis Public Schools, Arthur Ebert, who joined the district after the settlement, said in an email that he was “not in a position to comment on the details or the outcome of the case.” But he said that he believes “that every experience provides us with an opportunity to learn and grow.”

“Through this too,” he said, “we will gain knowledge, insight, and understanding that will help us maximize every student’s true potential.”

The Biden administration had also urged the court to side with Perez. The case is Perez v. Sturgis Public Schools, 21-887.

Source: https://apnews.com/article/supreme-court-disabilities-education-deaf-student-sturgis-fd55c0675055ccce0e4eb5f2af0115c0
Family Matters is recruiting volunteers who would like to become educational surrogate parents

WHAT IS AN EDUCATIONAL SURROGATE PARENT?

An Educational Surrogate Parent is an individual who has been appointed to represent the educational interests of a child with disabilities when:

- No parent (as defined under 34 CFR 300.30) can be identified;
- The parent cannot be located;
- The child is a youth in care; or
- The child is an unaccompanied homeless youth.

What are the responsibilities?

- Learns about the student’s educational needs by getting acquainted with the student, communicating with personnel involved in the student’s education and/or care, and observing the student at school;
- Acts as the student’s advocate for educational matters;
- Provides or withholds consent for assessment and services/placement;
- Attends educational meetings on the student’s behalf;
- Works with school staff to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the student;
- Negotiates for appropriate services on behalf of the student;
- Abides by the laws of confidentiality when sharing information about the student;
- Requests complaint, mediation or due process procedures, if necessary;
- Reports services twice a year (also basis for reimbursement).

By volunteering as an educational surrogate parent, he/she becomes an important member of a team in determining and ensuring a child receives a free and appropriate public education.

The educational surrogate parent must:

1. Complete the entire training (An educational surrogate parent application must be completed during the training)
2. Pass the training exam
3. Complete and pass a background check.

Is there reimbursement for expenses?

An educational surrogate parent (ESP) is eligible to receive a flat fee ($50) stipend for expenses incurred while providing services. To be eligible for the stipend, the ESP must have provided at least one of the following services:

1. Observed the student at school
2. Met with personnel involved in the student’s education
3. Met with personnel involved in the student’s care
4. Attended meetings in person (virtually during Covid) to develop or review the student’s Individualized Educational Program (IEP)

ESP submit a form twice a year to request the stipend for services provided to each student the ESP serves. An ESP can also choose to forego the stipend and volunteer their time.
Family Matters Provides Training for the Illinois State Board of Education’s Educational Surrogate Parent Program

If you are interested in serving as an educational surrogate parent for children in Illinois who need representation, or if you are already serving as an educational surrogate parent and need a refresher training, contact our office for more information. The required training on the special education process is six hours in length. Our office number is 866-436-7842.

Scheduled ESP Trainings

- University of Illinois Chicago
  - April 21, 2023
  - 9 am to 4 pm

- Waukegan Public Library
  - May 1, 2023
  - 10:30 am to 5:30 pm

Please call Family Matters at 866-436-7842 to register

Family Matters' Board of Directors

If you have an interest in serving as a Board member, please visit our website and complete an application.

http://www.fmptic.org/sites/default/files/prospective%20board%20member%20questionnaire2.pdf

We welcome parents that fulfill demographic needs including geographical locations; parent representation of disability types; representation of age ranges, gender, and diversity;
Judith Heumann was a disability rights activist and a leader of the disability community. In 1977, she helped to revive legislation that set the groundwork for the Americans with Disabilities Act. Judith Heumann died this month, on March 4, at the age of 75. She fought to become the first wheelchair user to teach in New York City public schools. In 1977, she helped lead a protest for legislation that would lay the groundwork for the Americans with Disabilities Act. And she served in the Clinton and Obama administrations advocating for disabled people in the U.S. and around the world. Before all that, she was a camper and counselor at Camp Jened, a summer camp for disabled people. In 2020 she starred in a documentary film, “Crip Camp” about her time at Camp Jened and she published a memoir “Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist”.

Heumann was born at a time when polio was at epidemic levels and she contracted the disease at age 2. The vaccine was not yet available then and she lost her ability to walk. Her parents were strong advocates for Judy, and when the principal of her school physically blocked the family from entering the school, her mother refused to accept that and demanded that her daughter have access to the classroom. Heumann went on to graduate from a public high school and from Long Island University. Her activism started in the 1970’s when she battled the New York Board of Education when they refused to give her a teaching license because they were afraid she could not evacuate herself or her students in case of a fire. She sued, reached a settlement and became the first teacher in the state to use a wheelchair. She also took part in demonstrations, advocating for the rights of people with disabilities, and helped launch the Independent Living Movement. She graduated from the University of California, Berkley with a Master’s degree in Public Health in 1975.

In 1983, Heumann co-founded the World Institute on Disability, one of the first global disability rights organizations founded and led by people with disabilities. She served as the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services in the Clinton Administration. President Obama appointed Heumann as the first Special Advisor on Disability Rights for the U.S. state department where she pushed for an international version of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

The world has lost a powerful, tireless advocate for disability rights. Rest in peace, Judy.

"DISABILITY ONLY BECOMES A TRAGEDY WHEN SOCIETY FAILS TO PROVIDE THE THINGS WE NEED TO LEAD OUR LIVES" - JUDY HEUMAN

Sources:
https://www.npr.org/2023/03/06/1161444646/remembering-disability-rights-activist-judith-heumann
https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/judith-heumann
Community-based settings include child care, preschools and Head Start. The report builds upon the work promoting inclusion in Illinois and includes research and recommendations for potential service models and funding models to advance high-quality inclusive special education and related services to preschoolers (3-5 years old) with disabilities in community-based early childhood education programs. The research included national literature, state examples, and feedback from community and school-based constituents in Illinois.

The exciting part of this report is that the recommendations clearly point to itinerant model (in which special education supports and services are brought to the program and child) options to support children. In addition, it advocates changes to funding, accountability, and data to assure the model is implemented. The report also recommends community collaboration to build the communication and trust across the various providers using support and professional development from technical assistance providers like Early CHOICES as well as national projects. Families have a strong role in moving this forward, so we encourage family voice and participation in the community design to support the implementation of the models.

More information will be shared as the work moves ahead and we will share opportunities and progress as we move ahead! Please follow Early CHOICES @earlychoicesorg on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

"Inclusion is a right, not a special privilege for a select few." - Oberti vs Board of Ed
Items Available from our Lending Library

A Balanced Life 9 Strategies for Coping with the Mental Health Problems of a Loved One

Written by: Tom Smith

This resource offers nine clear-cut, effective strategies for building a supportive relationship with someone who has a mental illness, while taking care of yourself.

To borrow these resources go to: www.fmptic.org/library

Your Students My Students Our Students Rethinking Equitable and Inclusive Classrooms

Written by: Lee Ann Jung, Nancy Frey, Douglas Fisher & Julie Kroener

This resource explores the hard truths of current special education practice. Written not for "special educators" or "general educators: but for ALL educators. It addresses the challenges, maps out the solutions, and provides tools and inspiration for the work ahead!
Archived Webinars

Our webinars are available any time of day as archived recordings on our website. Learn beneficial information as your schedule allows. Just visit https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings and search by topic category, title, date of recording, or presenter name. Click on the event you plan to watch, submit basic registration data (name, email, etc.), and the webinar will begin.

Transition Series for Those with Complex Support Needs - Megan Best
Illinois Early Intervention Extended Services - Karrie Potter
S.O.S. - Supporting Our Siblings - Rose Slaght
Special Needs Legal and Future Planning - Benji Rubin

Movie Featuring Actors with Intellectual Disabilities

“Champions,” a movie starring Woody Harrelson as the coach of a team of basketball players with intellectual disabilities, is in theaters. The team members are all actors with intellectual disabilities. “I love every part of this movie because we're the largest minority in the United States – the developmental disabled community – and it’s possibly the best experience of my life,” Casey Metcalfe, one of the actors, told Variety. “I feel like this will be a very influential, iconic movie.”
Easterseals, through generous support from Comcast NBC Universal, is providing parents with free access to this online screening tool. Because your child’s first 5 years of life are so important, we want to help you provide the best start for your child. You’ve been invited to participate in the Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition (ASQ-3), to help you keep track of your child’s development. The questionnaire may be provided every 2-, 4- or 6-month period. You will be asked to answer questions about some things your child can and cannot do. The questionnaire includes questions about your child’s communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal social skills.

Please enter your child’s birth date and the number of weeks he or she was born premature below to start the screening. Please note that the information you enter into this website is secure and cannot be seen or accessed by anyone other than the program employees who have invited you to participate in this screening. We look forward to your participation in ASQ-3!

https://asqonline.com/family/993-screening-family-access-open-asq-3-english/start

Family Stories in the EI Clearinghouse

Are you considering whether birth-to-three early intervention services may be needed for your family? Or do you have a friend or extended family member interested in early intervention? It can be intimidating to contact a provider about early intervention. To help families learn about early intervention, the EI Clearinghouse has short videos from families who have received early intervention services. The families are from all areas of the state of Illinois—urban, suburban and rural areas reflecting Chicago as well as Central and Southern Illinois. The Clearinghouse has families who have recorded their stories in various languages including English, Spanish, French, Urdu, Chinese, and Arabic. You can check out the videos to hear directly from families about their experiences with early intervention.

You can watch the whole video (which is usually around 5 minutes) or you can watch parts of the video relevant to your question or concern. Specifically, there are shorter clips of families answering questions including:

- What was the transition from early intervention to school services?
- What was the best strategy early intervention taught you?
- What do you wish families knew about early intervention?
- How did early intervention impact your family?
- How did you incorporate early intervention into your daily routines?
- Why did you enroll in early intervention?
- How would you describe an early intervention session?

Here is a link to all of the Clearinghouse videos:
https://www.youtube.com/@earlyinterventionclearinghouse/videos
In order to address the high rate of suspensions and expulsions in early childhood programs, new regulatory rules became part of the Illinois School Code during 2020. These rules are meant to reduce the amount of exclusionary discipline (removal from classrooms and programs) by requiring early childhood programs to receive training and technical assistance in developing behavior support plans, and as a last resort to develop transition plans when children have to move to a different program. Behavior support plans must describe in detail, the activities and strategies to be used to support strong teacher/child relationships, to document support that is being provided to address challenging behaviors in the classroom and to increase positive behaviors. Parents are key partners in developing behavior support plans. A Program Transition Plan must be completed prior to a child being removed from a program as a last resort when the previous steps have not been successful.

Parents, if your child is struggling with behavioral issues while attending an early childhood program, be aware of the exclusionary discipline requirements. For additional information about supporting children to develop self-regulation skills in early childhood, check out the following resources:

- **Best Practice Resources for Suspension & Expulsion in Early Childhood Education** - [https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Pages/Suspension-and-Expulsion-Resources.aspx](https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Pages/Suspension-and-Expulsion-Resources.aspx)
- **Early Childhood Expulsion Legislation: From Passage and Implementation to Best Practice** - [https://oecd.illinois.gov/](https://oecd.illinois.gov/)
- **Early Childhood Professional Development Projects** - [https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Early-Childhood-Professional-Development.aspx](https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Early-Childhood-Professional-Development.aspx)
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT: STUDENT RECORDS

QUESTIONS

1. School districts must maintain student temporary records for 5 years after a student has graduated and left the school system. True or False?
2. Teachers’ personal notes about a student must be included in the student’s school temporary records. True or False?
3. Parents have the right to challenge the accuracy or relevance of any entry in the school student records. True or False?
4. When a parent requests copies of the student’s permanent and temporary records from the school’s files, the school district must provide those copies within 30 business days. True or false?

ANSWERS

1. True  Students’ temporary records contain things like family background information (such as found in a written interview of parents about child’s history), intelligence test scores, aptitude test scores, psychological and personality test results, teacher evaluations, discipline records, IEPs, student status or reporting of domestic violence, and other information of educational relevance to the student. Under the Illinois School Student Records Act, those temporary records must be kept on file at the school district for not less than 5 years after the student has transferred, graduated or otherwise permanently withdrawn from school. This is important to know, as in future years, graduates may need copies of special education records to show their eligibility for adult services, therefore parents may need to assist their student to obtain copies of the records as they leave school. Student permanent school records include the minimum amount of personal information necessary to a school and includes the student’s name, birth date, address, grades and grade level, parents’ names and addresses, attendance records and such entries as the State Board may authorize. Those permanent records must be maintained by the school district for not less than 60 years after the student has left school.

2. False. Writings or other recorded information concerning a student that are kept by a teacher or therapist or other employee of the school district for their personal use and are not shared with anyone else, are not considered part of the student school record as long as they are destroyed not later than the student’s graduation or permanent withdrawal from school. In addition, school student records shall not contain information kept by law enforcement professionals working in the school (school resource officers).
3. True. Parents have the right to challenge entries in their child’s school student records, except for academic grades of their child, and references to expulsions or out-of-school suspensions if that challenge is made at the time the student’s records are being forwarded to another school to which the student is transferring. When parents do challenge the contents of the child’s records there are procedures in place for a records hearing, where parents have the right to present evidence and call witnesses, the right to cross-examine witnesses; the right to counsel; the right to a written statement of any decision and the reasons; and the right to appeal the decision. Even without a hearing, parents have the right to insert in their child’s records a statement of reasonable length setting forth their reasons for disputing any information contained in the record. The school then must include that statement in any further release of the records.

4. False. A parent’s request to inspect and copy records, or to allow a designated representative to receive, inspect or copy records, must be granted within a reasonable time, and in no case later than 10 business days after the receipt of the request by the official records custodian. In certain cases the time for response can be extended by not more than 5 business days. Those cases include times when the records are stored in other locations than the office in charge of them; the request involves the collection of a substantial amount of specified records; the request is for a certain category of records that requires an extensive search through the records; the requested records have not been located in a routine search and additional efforts are being made to find them; the request for records cannot be complied with by the school district within the time limits without unduly burdening or interfering with the operations of the school district; or there is a need for consultation among more than one school district or public body. The school district may charge its reasonable costs for the copying of school student records, not to exceed an amount fixed in schedules adopted by the State Board, except that no parent or student can be denied a copy of the records for inability to bear the cost of copying.

For more complete questions and answers about school student records, you can access the Illinois Student School Records Act in the Illinois School Code regulations 105 ILCS 10/ found at www.ilga.gov/legislation.

Additional information about access to school records can be found in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Guidance for Parents, at: https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/A%20parent%20guide%20to%20FERPA_508.pdf

"People of character do the right thing, not because they think it will change the world, but because they refuse to be changed by the world"

–Michael Josephson
KEEP EXTRA-CURRICULARS SAFE AND FUN

Whether kids want to be the next big pop star or learn to play a team sport, extra-curricular activities are a wonderful way for youth to follow their interests outside the classroom. Extra-curriculars let kids build friendships and learn lifelong skills. But even these fun activities are not necessarily safe from bullying behavior. Coaches, instructors, and other leaders need to do their part to create a supportive environment that prevents bullying.

WHAT COACHES CAN DO

Sports come with competition. Healthy competition can help kids become their best selves. Coaches can follow these tips to make sure that the competition stays friendly:

- Give kids a chance to learn and play new roles in practices and games.
- Create tasks around the students. Coaches can highlight each child's strengths to help make sure everyone has a role to play.
- Support kids having a tough time by asking another team member to mentor them.
- Remind kids that everyone gets better with practice, no matter their skill level at the start.

WHAT FAITH LEADERS CAN DO

Faith-based organizations can help youth learn positive values. Leaders can encourage students to use their learnings to prevent bullying by:

- Promoting awareness of other faiths to reject stereotypes.
- Having kids work together on community service projects.
- Teaching the importance of moral engagement.
- Having open conversations with kids about their bullying experiences to practice empathy.

WHAT LEADERS IN THE ARTS CAN DO

Arts teach kids creativity and self-expression. But they can also lead to students feeling vulnerable. To prevent bullying in art settings, leaders can:

- Teach children to give feedback constructively instead of making comments that may be hurtful.
- Teach kids that constructive feedback helps them improve and they should not take feedback personally.
- Encourage teamwork and mentoring.

MORE RESOURCES TO HELP STOP BULLYING

- Learn how to talk about bullying.
- Teachers, caregivers, and extra-curricular leaders, learn how to set policies and rules to prevent bullying.
- Kids and adults, see the guide on what you can do when you see bullying behavior.
- Visit the Training Center for research, modules, and other resources to prevent bullying.

stopbullying.gov/resources/training-center

Bullying can happen anywhere. If coaches, instructors, and other leaders see bullying behavior, they should address it immediately. Make sure the youth involved in bullying know what behavior is harmful and why there are consequences. Remember to support students who are bullied and bystanders who witness bullying. With the help of extra-curricular leaders, bullying can be prevented. With the help of extra-curricular leaders, bullying can be prevented.
E llen Braaten and Gretchen Felopulos are psychologists with extensive experience evaluating and counseling children with all types of learning disorders. Their work at the Psychology Assessment Center of Massachusetts General Hospital for Children and as faculty members of Harvard Medical School’s Department of Psychiatry, give them the credentials to produce a very comprehensive guide for parents in their book, Straight Talk about Psychological Testing for Kids. This book has been in Family Matters’ lending library for many years but remains one of the best resources for parent on understanding testing and evaluation.

The authors state their reason for writing Straight Talk was to help parents, who know their children better than anyone else, to follow their instincts when recognizing that their children need some help. They understand that parents often recognize before teachers or doctors that their children are struggling in school and though they often know their children need help, parents don’t know how or where to get it.

Straight Talk is a complete guide for parents on the process of getting the right kind of evaluation, in the right place, with the right professional, then understanding the results of the evaluation and how to talk to their children about the results. Braaten and Felopulos discuss the importance of testing in order to find explanations for problems and to develop appropriate interventions. For example, one of their discussions focuses on a child experiencing difficulty with writing. In order to provide the right supports to help the student with a writing problem, the team would need to know if the difficulty is because of a fine motor developmental problem, or a visual–motor integration problem, or a lack of organizational skills, or an attention deficit. Finding the root of the problem helps schools and parents provide the just right interventions.

The authors talk about evaluations in terms of four categories:
- Neuropsychological – assessing cognitive ability, attention, memory, learning and visual perceptual
- Educational achievement – assessing academic skills in decoding, reading comprehension, spelling, math, and writing
- Psychological – assessing social, emotional and behavioral functioning
- Developmental – assessments before age 4

Braaten and Felopulos describe common tests used in each of those categories and which might be used for particular learning issues. They explain the assessment process which might include all, some or most of these components: clinical interviews, IQ tests, achievement tests, neuropsychological tests, projective tests and tests of emotional functioning, self-reporting measures and behavioral rating measures. In addition to examples of these, the authors explain the differences between the various types of professional evaluators such as clinical psychologists, school psychologists, neuropsychologists, educational psychologists and psychiatrists. They provide a list of questions parents can ask potential evaluators to help them choose the right person. The book details information about warning signs at various developmental age level skills for: language, motor, social, behavioral and emotional functioning. That can help parents know what to look for and help decide if it is time to seek an evaluation.

Straight Talk describes the pros and cons of public and private evaluations and can help parents decide when they might need an independent evaluation if not satisfied with a school evaluation. Throughout the book the authors emphasize the purpose of testing is to develop solutions for learning and behavioral problems by recommending the right kinds of supports and interventions.
They also stress that testing cannot predict a child’s future or full potential, so they warn parents to avoid evaluators who tell them their child will “never be able to do” any certain thing.

After explaining testing processes, types of assessment tools, and how to interpret test results, the authors devote some chapters to specific types of learning issues such as dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, nonverbal learning disorder, Asperger syndrome, autism, math disorder (dyscalculia), disorder of written expression (dysgraphia), intellectual disability, giftedness, and mental health disorders like anxiety and depression. The types of testing for each of those areas are discussed along with the appropriate types of evaluators. Braaten and Felopulos explain how hidden learning disabilities frequently lurk behind anxiety and depression in kids, particularly as kids spend the majority of their days in an academic setting in which they are constantly reminded of their inadequacies.

This very thorough guide for parents can really help to increase understanding about how to get evaluations that highlight their kids’ learning strengths and weaknesses, and then how to use that information to develop IEP goals and needed services.

Although it is an older book and reveals its age in the chapter that discusses “mental retardation” instead of the correct terms intellectual or cognitive or developmental disabilities, it is still one of the best resources for families in understanding the evaluation process.

If you would like to check out this resource contact Family Matters at 866-436-7842, or request this resource by visiting the Family Matters Lending Library at https://www.fmptic.org/library
OPEN HOUSE
WEDNESDAY,
APRIL 19TH
2:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Join us for an open house to tour our expanded Demonstration Center, interactive Smart Home, accessible Tech Kitchen, 3D Makers space, and more. Assistive Technology experts will be available to answer questions about all IATP programs. We look forward to having you visit with us.

R.S.V.P. (217) 522-7985 or email iatp@iltech.org
If you missed our latest webinar on supported decision making and transition-age youth with extensive support needs, you can find the recording on the Family Matters website: https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings. You will find pertinent information, as well as a ton of great resources below. As a special education teacher, I wish that SDM had been a legal option of decision-making to support my students and their families in Illinois when I first started teaching. As of February 2022- it is! I hope you find this information and resources helpful to you or those involved. Feel free to share these resources with those that you know! Sharing is caring

We are always here for any questions you have or experiences you may want to share!

**What is Supported Decision Making?**

- Supported decision-making (SDM) is a tool that allows people with disabilities to retain their decision-making capacities by choosing supporters to help them make choices.
- A supporter is someone who the person using SDM selects to help them in decision making. These are trusted advisors such as friends, family members, or professionals.
- Supporters agree to help the person with a disability (principal) understand, consider, and communicate decisions, supporting the individual with a disability to make their own, informed choices.

**The Illinois Supported Decision-Making Agreement Act**

- For adults (18 or older) with intellectual and or developmental disabilities (ID/DD)
- Provides legal recognition to SDM agreements
- Requires third parties (landlords, service providers, medical professionals, schools, vocational providers) to recognize terms of the SDM agreement(s)
- Find more information [HERE](https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?name=102-0614&GA=102&SessionId=110&DocTypeId=HB&DocNum=3849&GAIID=16&SpecSess=&Session=)

**What Does Supported Decision-Making Look Like?**

- Finding tools to support a person with a disability to understand, make, and communicate their own choices:
  - Plain language, Visual and/or Audio Access
  - Extra time to discuss options
  - Create a list of pro’s and con’s
  - Role play
  - Bring a supporter to appointments to take notes and support the individual to remember and discuss options
  - Opening a joint bank account
- Supporters may:
  - Help the principal gather information on:
    - living options, work situations, medical treatment, relationships, benefits, and resources
  - Communicate information, track services, support appointments
  - Assist with questions, Support advocacy
Supporters may NOT...
- Make decisions for the principal
- Access any information without consent
- Uses information about the principal for any purpose other than supporting the principal
- Be paid to be in this role

**Supported Decision-Making Process Flowchart**

**Guardianship vs. Supported Decision-Making: The Basics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guardianship</th>
<th>SDM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decided by a judge</td>
<td>The person with the disability makes the decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person with the disability doesn't have control</td>
<td>The person with the disability is in the control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the person with the disability can lose the right to:</td>
<td>Supporters help the person with the disability with:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose where they live</td>
<td>o Everyday things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How they use their money</td>
<td>o Medical decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who they spend their time with</td>
<td>o Where to live or help with money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Guardianship vs. Supported Decision-Making: Assessment of Needs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guardianship</th>
<th>SDM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on the person's I.Q score and diagnosis</td>
<td>Strengths and support needs are discussed by the person with the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The court looks at what the person can do independently, without any</td>
<td>disability and their supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assistance or support</td>
<td>Person's abilities are based on assessment of what they can do alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The court assumes that these needs will remain the same over the course</td>
<td>and with support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the person's life</td>
<td>The person with the disability has the ability to modify supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and supporters over time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Identifying Alternatives to Guardianship Tool**

**Supported Decision-Making Resources**

- Illinois Guardianship & Advocacy Commission
  - Supported Decision-Making Brochure
  - SDM FAQ
  - SDM Learning PPT for Individuals with a Disability
  - Self Advocacy Alliance
  - IGAC
  - Self-Determination

- The Arc of Illinois
  - National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making
  - Center for Public Representation: Supported Decision-Making
Research shows that when schools build social and emotional learning into their curriculums, academic achievement improves for students. A new parent toolkit is available to help parents become advocates for social and emotional learning in their schools. It explains what social/emotional learning looks like, how schools implement it, and how it benefits all children. Included in the toolkit are questions parents can ask their schools or school board members about how the district is supporting student’s social, emotional, and academic learning:

- What practices or programs does our school use to teach social and emotional skills like conflict resolution, showing understanding and empathy for others, and being aware of emotions? How do you know these approaches work?
- How are students taught to cope with frustration, anger, and other challenging feelings? Who teaches these skills and what are the strategies they teach?
- Whose job is it to ensure that all students feel safe and secure and treat each other well?
- How can students tell teachers when they are feeling upset or in need of support without the rest of the class knowing?
- How do teachers and other staff know what they are supposed to do when they see bullying or other hurtful behavior? How are they trained in how to stop bullying or other hurtful behavior when it happens? How are they trained in how to keep it from happening in the first place?

Adapted from Making Caring Common Project. Read more here https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-families/questions-ask-schools:

Get the entire parent advocacy toolkit here: https://leadingwithsel.org/toolkit-for-champions/?link_id=7&can_id=c551a97566f21d8f90d858f2e3053fe2&source=email-january-18-newsletter-sel4us-news-2&email_referrer=email_1852385&email_subject=-sel4us-news-march-22
High profile acts of violence, particularly in schools, can confuse and frighten children who may feel in danger or worry that their friends or loved-ones are at risk. They will look to adults for information and guidance on how to react. Parents and school personnel can help children feel safe by establishing a sense of normalcy and security and talking with them about their fears.

1. **Reassure children that they are safe.** Emphasize that schools are very safe. Validate their feelings. Explain that all feelings are okay when a tragedy occurs. Let children talk about their feelings, help put them into perspective, and assist them in expressing these feelings appropriately.

2. **Make time to talk.** Let their questions be your guide as to how much information to provide. Be patient; children and youth do not always talk about their feelings readily. Watch for clues that they may want to talk, such as hovering around while you do the dishes or yard work. Some children prefer writing, playing music, or doing an art project as an outlet. Young children may need concrete activities (such as drawing, looking at picture books, or imaginative play) to help them identify and express their feelings.

3. **Keep your explanations developmentally appropriate.**
   - **Early elementary school** children need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that their school and homes are safe and that adults are there to protect them. Give simple examples of school safety like reminding children about exterior doors being locked, child monitoring efforts on the playground, and emergency drills practiced during the school day.
   - **Upper elementary and early middle school** children will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe and what is being done at their school. They may need assistance separating reality from fantasy. Discuss efforts of school and community leaders to provide safe schools.
   - **Upper middle school and high school** students will have strong and varying opinions about the causes of violence in schools and society. They will share concrete suggestions about how to make school safer and how to prevent tragedies in society. Emphasize the role that students have in maintaining safe schools by following school safety guidelines (e.g. not providing building access to strangers, reporting strangers on campus, reporting threats to the school safety made by students or community members, etc.), communicating any personal safety concerns to school administrators, and accessing support for emotional needs.

4. **Review safety procedures.** This should include procedures and safeguards at school and at home. Help children identify at least one adult at school and in the community to whom they go if they feel threatened or at risk.

5. **Observe children’s emotional state.** Some children may not express their concerns verbally. Changes in behavior, appetite, and sleep patterns can also indicate a child’s level of anxiety or discomfort. In most children, these symptoms will ease with reassurance and
time. However, some children may be at risk for more intense reactions. Children who have had a past traumatic experience or personal loss, suffer from depression or other mental illness, or with special needs may be at greater risk for severe reactions than others. Seek the help of mental health professional if you are at all concerned.

6. Limit television viewing of these events. Limit television viewing and be aware if the television is on in common areas. Developmentally inappropriate information can cause anxiety or confusion, particularly in young children. Adults also need to be mindful of the content of conversations that they have with each other in front of children, even teenagers, and limit their exposure to vengeful, hateful, and angry comments that might be misunderstood.

7. Maintain a normal routine. Keeping to a regular schedule can be reassuring and promote physical health. Ensure that children get plenty of sleep, regular meals, and exercise. Encourage them to keep up with their schoolwork and extracurricular activities but don’t push them if they seem overwhelmed.

Suggested Points to Emphasize When Talking to Children

- Schools are safe places. School staff works with parents and public safety providers (local police and fire departments, emergency responders, hospitals, etc.) to keep you safe.
- The school building is safe because … (cite specific school procedures).
- We all play a role in the school safety. Be observant and let an adult know if you see or hear something that makes you feel uncomfortable, nervous or frightened.
- There is a difference between reporting, tattling or gossiping. You can provide important information that may prevent harm either directly or anonymously by telling a trusted adult what you know or hear.
- Although there is no absolute guarantee that something bad will never happen, it is important to understand the difference between the possibility of something happening and probability that it will affect you (our school community).
- Senseless violence is hard for everyone to understand. Doing things that you enjoy, sticking to your normal routine, and being with friends and family help make us feel better and keep us from worrying about the event.
- Sometimes people do bad things that hurt others. They may be unable to handle their anger, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or suffering from mental illness. Adults (parents, teachers, police officers, doctors, faith leaders) work very hard to get those people help and keep them from hurting others. It is important for all of us to know how to get help if we feel really upset or angry and to stay away from drugs and alcohol.
- Stay away from guns and other weapons. Tell an adult if you know someone has a gun. Access to guns is one of the leading risk factors for deadly violence.
- Violence is never a solution to personal problems. Students can be part of the positive solution by participating in anti-violence programs at school, learning conflict mediation skills, and seeking help from an adult if they or a peer is struggling with anger, depression, or other emotions they cannot control.

NASP has additional information for parents and educators on school safety, violence prevention, children’s trauma reactions, and crisis response at www.nasponline.org.

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