



Advocacy in *Forward Motion* - Crossing Language and Cultural Barriers to Reach Family Advocates and Self-advocates

How can we work to support families from diverse cultural and linguistic communities?

- We want to try to understand a family's or self-advocate's perspectives and cultural/community experiences. This opens our minds to understand what is actually needed.
- This understanding must come from the family or self-advocate themselves and from members of their cultural community.
- We want to try to meet and get to know people who are willing and able to help bridge understanding between cultures.

To support English learners

- Employ bilingual staff that represent the family's or individual's culture.
- Provide language interpretation for all interactions (scheduling, meetings, paperwork, etc.)
- Provide as much written information as possible in the person's or family's native language.
- Call potential resource agencies ahead before referring-check to see if they have an interpreter or bilingual staff that can be a bridge.

To support our staff

- Train monolingual staff to use interpreters effectively.

(Example: Speak directly to the parent instead of saying to the interpreter, “Tell her....”)

(Example: With Marshallese families, choose the appropriate gender of interpreter when health issues or other sensitive topics are addressed)

- Train all staff to understand their own unconscious biases.
- Train all staff to create safe space for people of all backgrounds, whether cultural ethnicity, socio-economic situation, disability, etc.

(Example: Culturally diverse families may speak, read and write English, so it is best to ask them to indicate the preferred language)

- Work as a team so that bilingual staff does not become overloaded as they bridge and interpret many interactions, issues, etc.

Family members or friends as interpreters

- Make it a policy never to use minor children as interpreters.
 - can be traumatizing if topic is sensitive
 - gives child power over the parent
 - children may change the message out of fear of consequences
- Be aware that bilingual family members may not be able to interpret correctly due to lack of experience with the topics or limited English skills/limitations in the first or second language.

Making connections in the community

- **Find and collaborate with community members from the cultures represented by families and people you serve.**
- **Connect parent advocates and self-advocates with people who have had similar experiences and who can share them.**
- **Keep a personal connection with English learners, phone calls, texts, in-person visits. A face-to-face interaction helps to establish trust.**
- **Marshallese community members are also frequent users of social media, but a personal connection from a member of the same culture is essential.**

(Example: To respect cultural norms, when contacting Marshallese families, men should interact with men and women should interact with female family members if the conversation involves health issues or sensitive topics.)

- **Talk to and collaborate with agencies, businesses, and organizations who represent the family's or person's culture.**

(Example: In NWA, Hispanic Women's Organization, One Community, Arkansas United, La Zeta radio station, Univision television station, Arkansas Coalition of Marshallese (ACOM), Marshallese Educational Initiative (MEI)

Strategies for advocating for yourself and others

- **Make the call/write the email or letter – do not wait for someone to call you!**
- **Write out a list of questions, suggestions and ideas before you go to any meeting.**

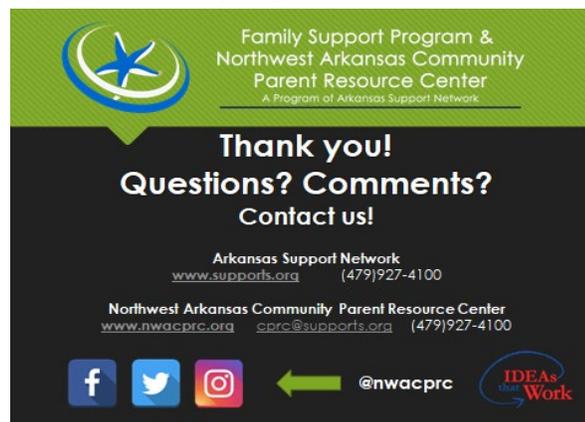
- Ask many, many questions until you understand the information that you are being given clearly.
- Ask professionals to explain terminology you do not understand.
- KEEP KNOCKING ON DOORS until you find answers, solutions, information that you need.

Advocating for your child or yourself in school settings

- REMEMBER! Home (parents and students) is half the special education team, school is the other half.
- Know your rights under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act). (See Resources)
- Get to know your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) paperwork and, most importantly, goals. (See Resources)

Effective communication creates the bridge between us and the information we want to give and receive

- Find the best method of communication with your child's teacher, school staff (or anyone else who is involved in your child's education). Make a question list before all conferences.
- Ask for help from an educational advocate if you do not feel confident to discuss your child's program with the school team.





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Resources for Parent/Self/School Advocacy

- Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC) of Arkansas Support Network (ASN) - Information in English, Spanish, Marshallese www.nwacprc.org
- The Center for Exceptional Families (CFEF) www.thecenterforexceptionalfamilies.org
- Parent Center Hub - Information for parents and professionals in several languages; for Spanish, <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/recursos-en-espanol/>
- Disability Rights of Arkansas (DRA) <https://disabilityrightsar.org/>
- Developmental Disability Council of Arkansas (DDC) <https://gcdd.arkansas.gov/>
- Arkansas Transition Services (ATS) www.arkansastransition.com

Some Resources from Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) www.arkansased.gov

- Your Rights Under IDEA (English) and Your Rights Under IDEA (Spanish) at www.arkansased.gov
- Special Education Forms (English, Spanish, Marshallese, Vietnamese) at www.arkansased.gov

- **Special Education Process Guide** (updated April 19, 2019, Arkansas Dept. of Ed., Special Education Unit, pdf)
- **Parent and Educator Resource Guide to Section 504 in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools** (Dec. 2016, US Dept. of Ed., pdf)
- **Dear Colleague Letter: Inclusion of Behavioral Supports in Individualized Education Programs** (Aug. 1, 2016, US Dept. of Ed., pdf)
- **Supporting English Learners with Disabilities** - ADE has extensive new training materials for educators – contact Trisha Kerr at tricia.kerr@arkansas.gov

Books about Parent/School Advocacy

- **From Emotions to Advocacy, Second Edition; The Special Education Survival Guide**, by Pam and Pete Wright of www.wrightslaw.com
- **All About IEPs – Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About IEP’s** by Pam and Pete Wright

Resources for Working to Bridge Communities

- **Partners for Inclusive Communities** (Welcome the Children, trainings for preschool and other staff throughout the state, new ABICE educational interpreter state certification, etc.) www.partners@uark.edu
- **The OSEP Spanish Glossary Project, English-Spanish Glossary of Common Terms Related to IDEA**, (US Department of Education)
- **Child Welfare Terms, English and Spanish Glossary**
http://www.childwelfare.gov/glossary/terms_english_spanish_a-b.cfm

- Colorín Colorado, A Bilingual Site for Educators and Families - Videos, information, resources about raising and educating bilingual children www.colorincolorado.org
- The PACER Center - Working With Culturally Diverse Families (parent videos, parent involvement in school) <http://www.pacer.org/cultural-diversity/>

Resources for the Marshallese Community

- Arkansas Coalition of Marshallese (ACOM), 479-365-6625
614 E. Emma Avenue, Suite 113, Springdale, AR
- Marshallese Educational Initiative (MEI), 479-365-7019
614 E. Emma Avenue, Suite 203, Springdale, AR
- Marshallese Consulate, 479-419-9332, 109 Spring St. #3, Springdale, AR

Family Support Program &
Northwest Arkansas Community
Parent Resource Center
A Program of Arkansas Support Network

Thank you!
Questions? Comments?
Contact us!

Arkansas Support Network
www.supports.org (479)927-4100

Northwest Arkansas Community Parent Resource Center
www.nwacprc.org cprc@supports.org (479)927-4100

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