

How an advocate can help

PACER Center is the place where **Minnesota families of children with disabilities and young adults with disabilities** can gain information, training, and support. PACER advocates operate on the principle of helping parents and families find success for their children through training and advocacy.

What we can do:

- Provide information to help you understand special education and other education programs for students with disabilities.
- Help you understand your rights as the parent or guardian of a child with a disability.
- Assist you in advocating for your child and resolving issues with the school district.
- Discuss your options without telling you what to do.
- Help you learn to communicate effectively with the school (i.e. how to state your concerns, who to contact).
- Refer you to helpful trainings and resources.
- Help you identify available educational options for your child.
- Assist you in a confidential manner.

When to contact an advocate:

- If you are new to special education for your children with disabilities and want to understand the process.
- While problems are still small.
- Anytime you see a need related to your child's education.
- When you and the school disagree about special education services, support, or placement.

How to contact an advocate:

By email or phone (voicemail) at (952) 838-9000 and mnparent@pacер.org

- Provide the following information:
 - ◇ your child's age and disability label, if you know it
 - ◇ a brief summary of your questions or concerns
 - ◇ primary phone number
 - ◇ email address

An advocate will return your call or email you within 3-4 business days.

Let us know if you'd prefer to talk to a multicultural advocate: African American, Southeast Asian, Somali, or Hispanic/Latino.

Before you talk with an advocate:

- Gather and review your child’s records (for example: evaluation reports, Individualized Education Program (IEP), or Section 504 plan).
- Make a list of questions or concerns.
- Have something to write on to take notes.

After your conversation with an advocate, you might:

- Send educational records for the advocate to read (if requested by advocate).
- Follow through with a plan of action discussed between you and the advocate.
- Call back with additional details or concerns.

PACER advocates are not:

- Attorneys that can give legal advice or represent you or your child in court or in the special education hearing process.
- Typically able to attend IEP meetings.
- Educational consultants who case manage your child’s educational process.