

Welcome to the online training module for the new guidance manual *Special Education Surrogate Parents: Protecting the Student Voice in the Special Education Process*.

North Carolina’s Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and the Exceptional Children Division (ECD) have the responsibility to ensure that all children with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education or FAPE.

The comprehensive general supervision system:

1. Supports practices that improve educational results and functional outcomes for children and youth with disabilities;
2. Uses multiple methods to identify and correct noncompliance; and
3. Utilizes mechanisms to encourage and support improvement and enforce compliance.

This professional development helps support the general supervision of LEAs in the areas of:

1. Dispute resolution;
2. Policies, practices, and procedures; and
3. Monitoring activities.

While General Supervision defines the responsibilities of the EC Division and of LEA EC services, the State Systemic Improvement Plan, or SSIP, identifies a more specific focus for improvement in graduation rates for students with disabilities.

To accomplish that goal, the EC Division has identified broad root causes that inform the areas we will have to focus on statewide – Academics, Behavior, and the Continuum of Transitions. For each of these, it will be necessary to consider how we are addressing engagement from students, staff, families, and communities.

In an effort to increase the success of the student, this framework allows you to inform, explain and make connections to Academics, Behavior, the Continuum of Transitions and Engagement.

There are some specific considerations for improving academics, behavior, and the continuum of transitions.

As we look at the utilization of special education surrogate parents in this professional learning, we are really looking at making sure that all students have a voice in the development of their individual educational program or IEP.

Research shows that there is a direct correlation between increased levels of parent engagement and gains in student achievement and success, including improving graduation rates. Special Education Surrogate Parents support students who do not have a “parent” available to make special education decisions. This guidance manual will assist schools in their efforts to improve implementation of services for students with disabilities in all areas— academics, behavior, and continuum of transitions.

The Legal Mandate of Special Education Surrogate Parents

Federal law requires states, intermediate, and local educational agencies to establish and maintain procedures for assigning a Special Education Surrogate Parent to a student whenever the location of the biological parents or guardian of the student is not known, not able to be located, or the student is a ward of the state.

Federal regulations provide the legal definition of a “surrogate parent” and stipulate the requirements that must be met when an LEA selects and assigns a Special Education Surrogate Parent for a student with no identifiable parent or to a student who is a ward of the state.

State law provides that “surrogate parent” shall be defined as outlined in the IDEA regulations. (34 C.F.R. § 300.519 (d))

North Carolina’s *Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities (2014)* addresses the legal requirement for surrogate parents in NC 1504-1.20.

Each LEA must ensure that the rights of a student are protected when—

- No parent (as defined in NC 1500-2.24) can be identified;
- The LEA, after reasonable efforts, cannot locate a parent;
- The student is a ward of the State under the laws of North Carolina and the parents’ rights have been terminated or their rights to make educational decisions have been terminated by the court; or
- The student is an unaccompanied homeless youth as defined in section 725(6) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a (6)).

The duties of an LEA include the assignment of an individual to act as a surrogate in the role of the parents for the student.

This must include a method—

- For determining whether a student needs a special education surrogate parent;
- For assigning a special education surrogate parent to the student; and
- For training that ensures the special education surrogate parent has knowledge and skills that ensure adequate representation of the child.

LEAs must select Special Education Surrogate Parents who meet specific criteria.

They must ensure that a person selected as a surrogate parent—

- Is not an employee of the State Education Agency (SEA), the LEA, or any other agency that is involved in the education or care of the student, such as the Department of Health and Human Services, a group home, or a therapeutic foster parent;

- Has no personal or professional interest that conflicts with the interest of the student the surrogate parent will represent; and
- Has knowledge and skills that ensure adequate representation of the student.

Other Factors to Consider:

A person otherwise qualified to be a surrogate parent is not an employee of the agency solely because he or she is compensated by the LEA to serve as a special education surrogate parent.

In the case of a student who is an unaccompanied homeless youth, appropriate staff of emergency shelters, transitional shelters, independent living programs, and street outreach programs may be appointed as temporary special education surrogates until a surrogate can be appointed that meets all of the criteria for special education surrogate parents.

Special education surrogate parent volunteers should be willing to fully participate in the process of ensuring the student is provided FAPE, including using rights to dispute resolution if necessary. It is the responsibility of the LEA to provide contact information to the special education surrogate parent about pro bono legal services, for example Legal Aide/Low Cost Attorneys.

The special education surrogate parent may represent the student in all matters relating to—

- The identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the student; and
- The provision of FAPE to the student.

Surrogate parents only serve in the “parent” role in special education decisions within the context of the IEP process.

Special education surrogate parents CANNOT sign other school forms, such as permission forms for field trips or other activities.

The State Education Agency or SEA must ensure that the LEA makes reasonable efforts to ensure the assignment of a surrogate parent **not more than 30 days** after an LEA determines that the student needs a surrogate.

School administrators are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the definition of parent and to establish the most efficient way to determine if parents have educational decision-making rights.

Let’s review the definition of parent as stated in NC policy 1500-2.24.

(a) Parent means—

- (1) A biological or adoptive parent of a child;
- (2) A foster parent, unless State law, regulations, or contractual obligations with a State or local entity prohibit a foster parent from acting as a parent (e.g. therapeutic foster parent);
- (3) A guardian generally authorized to act as the child’s parent, or authorized to make educational decisions for the child (but not the State if the child is a ward of the State);
- (4) An individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative) with whom the child lives, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child’s welfare; or

(5) A surrogate parent who has been appointed in accordance with §300.519 or section 639(a)(5) of the Act.

(b)

(1) **Except as provided in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, the biological or adoptive parent, when attempting to act as the parent under this part and when more than one party is qualified under paragraph (a) of this section to act as a parent, must be presumed to be the parent for purposes of this section unless the biological or adoptive parent does not have legal authority to make educational decisions for the child.**

(2) If a judicial decree or order identifies a specific person or persons under paragraphs (a)(1) through (4) of this section to act as the “parent” of a child or to make educational decisions on behalf of a child, then such person or persons shall be determined to be the “parent” for purposes of this section.

The biological or adoptive parent is always the first consideration unless his or her parental rights or rights to make educational decisions for the student have been terminated.

This applies to EITHER biological or adoptive parents.

If there is a question about parental rights, the LEA has the responsibility to seek clarification of parental status, and if necessary, request to review a copy of the court order.

What is the LEA’s first step?

The LEA must review the current court order to verify the status of parental rights of BOTH parents and the court-ordered plan for the student.

Biological/Adoptive parents are assumed to have educational decision-making rights unless:

- There is an Order of Termination of Parental Rights;
- The right of the biological/adoptive parents to make educational decisions is removed by a court order; or
- The right to make educational decisions is given to a specific person or persons through a court order.

Detailed documentation of all efforts to locate a student's parents is recommended when investigating the need for a special education surrogate parent.

- “Reasonable efforts” may include attempts to locate parents through phone calls, letters, certified mail with a receipt and a visit to the last known residence of the parents.

Of course, in situations where the parent disagrees with an LEA's initial evaluation or placement intentions, the LEA may not circumvent the parent's due process rights by appointing a special education surrogate parent.

It is important to remember that the LEA does NOT have the authority to appoint a special education surrogate parent where a student's parent is available or can be identified and located after reasonable efforts, but REFUSES OR IS UNABLE, TO ATTEND a meeting or otherwise represent the student.

Likewise, when a parent is incarcerated, it does NOT automatically terminate their parental rights.

- The same steps of verifying parental status and documentation of the LEA's efforts to verify location and availability of EITHER biological or adoptive parents apply to students whose parents are incarcerated.
- Correctional facilities may allow the parent to participate via telephone conference.
- After all documented efforts to involve the biological or adoptive parent have been exhausted, the LEA may decide to temporarily assign a special education surrogate parent.
- The LEA is responsible for monitoring the status of the parent's availability and the need for a special education surrogate parent.

When a student is removed from the home in North Carolina, the magistrate or judge does not always issue an order removing a parent's rights to make educational decisions or terminate the parents' legal rights. The student is considered a ward of the state.

Foster parents and special education surrogate parents are **only** used for students who are wards of the state **AND**:

- The biological or adoptive parents' rights have been terminated **or**
- The right to make educational decisions has been given to a specific person through court order.

Again, the LEA's first step is to review the current court order to verify the status of parental rights of BOTH parents and the court-ordered plan for the student.

The Biological or Adoptive parents are assumed to have educational decision-making rights unless:

- There is an Order of Termination of Parental Rights;
- The right of the biological or adoptive parents to make educational decisions is removed by a court order; or

- The right to make educational decisions is given to a specific person or persons through a court order.
- ***Some individuals may not be able to serve as a special education surrogate parent due to a CONFLICT OF INTEREST.***
- “Therapeutic Foster Care” means a foster home where the foster parent has received additional training and compensation for providing care to students with behavioral mental health or substance abuse problems. Therapeutic foster parents CANNOT serve as surrogate parents because there is a conflict of interest. Determining services that a student needs at school could impact the services the student needs at home, therefore potentially creating a benefit for the therapeutic foster parent.
- Employees of Group Homes have a similar conflict of interest as therapeutic foster parents; therefore, they CANNOT serve as surrogate parents, as well.

Here are some guiding practices for assisting LEAs in determining who can serve in the role of a parent:

- **If there is a question about the legal status of an individual student or parent, the LEA should always contact its attorney.**
- **Foster parents** that qualify under the definition of parent as stated in NC 1500-2.24 may serve as parent for a student **if** the student is a ward of the State under the laws of North Carolina **and** the parents’ rights have been terminated **or** their rights to make educational decisions have been terminated by the court.
- ***Therapeutic foster parents or agents of North Carolina Department of Social Services cannot act as special education surrogate parents under any circumstances. (N.C.G.S. 115C-116(c) and 20 U.S.C. 1415(b)(b) and 55 N.C.A.G. 94 (1986))***
- ***A guardian ad litem may only serve as parent if he or she has been appointed by the court or meets the criteria and has been appointed as a special education surrogate parent by the LEA.*** The role of the guardian ad litem is different from that of a surrogate parent. As a policy, the NC Guardian Ad Litem Program advises their volunteers to NOT SERVE in both roles unless it is ordered by the courts. While guardian ad litem volunteers are legally not prohibited from serving in the role of a special education surrogate parent, the student’s special education interests may be best represented by another individual serving as the surrogate parent. LEAs must use the same requirements for selecting, training and assigning ALL special education surrogate parents, including guardian ad litem volunteers if it is determined that he or she will serve as a special education surrogate parent.
- ***Employees of group homes, Mental Health, or the LEA may not serve as the parent or be appointed as special education surrogate parents. (NC 1504-1.20)***

- In the case of a student who is a ward of the State, the **special education surrogate parent alternatively may be appointed by the judge** overseeing the student’s case, if the surrogate meets the criteria for special education surrogate parents as stated in NC 1504-1.20.

It may be appropriate for any of these individuals to attend the students’ IEP meetings, at the discretion of the parent(s) or the LEA, since these individuals may have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student.

Any state receiving IDEA funds must ensure that the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act are met for all children with disabilities in homeless situations in the state. (20 USC §1412(a)(11)(A)(iii)) LEAs must coordinate McKinney-Vento and special education services within the LEA, and with other involved LEAs.

WHO CAN CONSENT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATIONS AND SERVICES FOR UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH?

- Their natural or adoptive parent.
- An “individual acting in the place of a natural or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative) with whom the child lives.”
- A surrogate parent.

By definition, unaccompanied homeless youth are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. Sometimes an unaccompanied youth’s natural or adoptive parent may be involved with the child’s education. If parents maintain an active role in their child’s education, they must be allowed to participate in the special education process as defined in IDEA and related regulations and state laws.

Some unaccompanied youth live with informal caregivers who provide the student with shelter. Some of these adults may be involved in the student’s education and are willing to be considered as a “parent” under IDEA. These adults may consent for evaluations and services. In other cases, caregivers are not “acting in the place of” a parent and do not wish to participate in the youth’s education. These adults do not meet IDEA’s definition of “parent.”

Most unaccompanied homeless youth have neither a natural/adoptive parent nor an individual acting in the place of a parent to consent for special education evaluations and services. IDEA requires a special education surrogate parent be assigned to these unaccompanied youth to make special education decisions.

There are recommended procedures to assist LEAs with the process for determining the need for special education surrogate parents for unaccompanied homeless youth.

1. **Attempt to contact an unaccompanied youth’s natural or adoptive parent.**

2. **Assess whether the youth has an “individual acting in the place of” a parent.**
3. **Appoint a “temporary surrogate” for unaccompanied youth.**
4. **Assign a special education surrogate parent to represent the student within 30 days.**
5. **Provide annual professional development.**

More information about these procedures can be found on page 11 in the guidance manual.

What happens when a student who has an appointed special education surrogate parent turns 18 years old?

There are circumstances that will occur when a student with a disability reaches the age of majority. In accordance with the IDEA and North Carolina Policy, once the student reaches his or her eighteenth birthday, it is presumed that he or she is competent to make his or her own decisions. All rights that were afforded to the student’s parents under the IDEA are transferred to the student. In these instances, individuals serving in the role of parent (biological or adoptive, surrogate, etc.) must be notified by the LEA regarding the transfer of parental rights.

However, there is a *Special Rule* in North Carolina policy for the student whose level of competence will not allow him or her the ability to exercise the transfer of parental rights. In the best interest of the student, the parent may retain all rights, privileges and responsibilities for the educational decisions even though the student has reached the age of majority.

The LEA must provide notice to the student’s parents that he or she is reaching the age of majority and ensure one of the following actions:

- The student is declared incompetent and a representative is appointed to make decisions for the student by a court; or
- The student has designated another competent adult to represent him or her in writing by power of attorney or similar legal document.
- Alternately, if the student is determined unable to provide informed consent and does not have a representative appointed by a court may have an educational representative appointed by the LEA based on the *Special Rule* outlined in NC Policies. *There are specific guidelines that the LEA must follow when appointing an educational representative for these students. Further explanation of these guidelines can be found on pages 12 and 13 in the guidance manual.*

A special education surrogate parent does not have any rights and responsibilities for the student outside of the special education process.

A special education surrogate parent is only responsible for representing the student when decisions about his or her special education program are made concerning:

- Identification of the need for the student to receive special education services
- Evaluation to determine his or her individual needs
- Design of his or her IEP (Individualized Education Program), including placement
- Ongoing reviews of educational progress
- Disagreement with the school's educational proposals

In order to fulfill these responsibilities, the special education surrogate parent should learn about state and federal requirements for special education and about school district structure and procedures.

The special education surrogate parent should also have an understanding of the student's disability and needs and have an ability to effectively advocate for the student. Special education surrogate parents need to have access to information, training, and support so that they may develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to advocate effectively for students with disabilities.

When an individual is assigned to be special education surrogate parent, he or she HAS THE RIGHT TO:

- Receive a copy of NC Procedural Safeguards for parents.
- Review all educational records and reports relating to the student.
- Receive copies of IEPs and evaluations.
- Represent the student in any mediation, appeals, and/or due process procedures.
- Check on the student's educational progress during the school year. For example, are the IEP objectives being met or are the services being provided that are listed on the IEP?

The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Education records are records that are directly related to a student and are maintained by an educational agency or institution or a party acting for or on behalf of the agency or institution. These records include but are not limited to grades, transcripts, class lists, student course schedules, health records (at the K-12 level), student financial information (at the postsecondary level), and student discipline files. The information may be recorded in any way, including, but not limited to, handwriting, print, computer media, videotape, audiotape, film, microfilm, microfiche, and e-mail.

- A special education surrogate parent is required to adhere to confidentiality safeguards concerning information about the student.

- The LEA should review the responsibilities regarding confidentiality with all special education surrogate parents.
- Special education Surrogate parent volunteers should return all copies of student records upon dissolution of their appointment to represent a student.

The appointment process begins the journey of an individual's assignment as a special education surrogate parent.

The LEA is responsible for assigning a special education surrogate parent to act in the place of a parent in the special education decision-making process.

To ensure that the rights of the student is protected under the IDEA, the LEA has established procedures for selecting and training volunteers to serve as surrogate parents to address the following areas:

- Development of a comprehensive training program for special education surrogate parents.
- Recruitment of individuals who meet the qualifications to serve as special education surrogate parents.
- Delivery of training to individuals approved to serve as special education surrogate parents.
- Documentation of completion is provided to individuals participating in the special education surrogate parent training.
- Establishment of an ongoing support and training program for individuals serving in the role of special education surrogate parents.
- Evaluation and monitoring the special education surrogate parent program is an ongoing process

The LEA is responsible for ensuring that a parent is available to represent a student when making decisions for special education services and must identify those students who are in need of a special education surrogate parent through the following activities:

- The LEA develops a process for identifying students who need to be assigned a special education surrogate parent.
- The LEA receives a written request for an assignment of a special education surrogate parent from the student's school.
- The LEA reviews the current court order and custody documentation.

- The LEA verifies the status of the parental rights of the student's parents.
- The LEA documents the appointment of an educational representative as described in NC 1504-1.21 *Special Rule* for a student age 18 and over that is determined unable to provide informed consent.
- The LEA maintains a copy of the documentation in the student's record.
- The LEA documents whether the student needs a special education surrogate parent.
- The LEA assigns an individual who has been trained to serve as a special education surrogate parent, as required.
- The individual signs the agreement and acknowledgement of confidentiality with the LEA to serve as a surrogate parent.
- The LEA maintains a file with all signed agreements.
- The LEA provides written notification of the surrogate parent assignment to the student's school.
- The written notification is maintained in the student's EC record.

The LEA is responsible for assigning and tracking all special education surrogate parent appointments to ensure that the student with a disability has his or her rights protected through the following procedures:

- The LEA develops a written process for assigning a special education surrogate parent.
- The LEA maintains a current list of individuals who have been trained as special education surrogate parents.
- The LEA appoints all special education surrogate parent assignments, as necessary.
- The LEA maintains a current list of students who are assigned a special education surrogate parent.
- The LEA monitors and annually evaluates the activities of each special education surrogate parent to make sure that he or she is performing the duties as set forth by federal and state regulations.
- The LEA investigates all written notifications regarding any cases of conflict of interest or reports that the special education surrogate parent is not acting in the best interest of the student.

There are times when a special education surrogate parent is no longer needed. These situations may include:

- The student has reached the age of majority and the right to make educational decisions is transferred to the student. The student represents him or herself unless a guardian has been appointed. However, a special education surrogate parent can be assigned at the request of the student.
- The LEA is able to locate the biological or adoptive parent.
- The biological or adoptive parent of the student assumes responsibility for making educational decisions through court order.
- The student is no longer in need of or eligible for special education and related services.
- The student moves out of the district.
- A new guardian is appointed by the court.
- The special education surrogate parent wishes to relinquish his or her responsibility.
- The student has been assigned to a foster care placement and the foster parent is qualified and is willing to serve as a parent as defined in the IDEA and NC *Policies*. In this instance, the foster parent is not required to participate in training or to be appointed as a special education surrogate parent.

The LEA may terminate the assignment if the district is able to document cases of impropriety when:

- An individual has been unable to perform as a surrogate parent.
- There becomes a conflict of interest while an individual is in the role of the special education surrogate parent.
- The special education surrogate parent has violated the minimum standards of practice, including a breach of confidentiality.
- The well-being of the student is threatened.

The LEA cannot remove an assigned special education surrogate parent when he or she does not agree with the district.

Upon dissolution of the individual's duties as surrogate parent, he or she must return all student records to the LEA.

Any time parental rights have been terminated by the court, a surrogate is appointed unless another individual, who meets the definition of parent in NC 1500-2.24, can serve in that role.

Employees of group homes, DSS, Mental Health, or the LEA, and therapeutic foster parents may not serve as the parent or be appointed as surrogates.

The chart shown serves as a guide to help LEAs walk-through the problem-solving process of deciding when it is appropriate to assign a special education surrogate parent.

Let's look at the column for "Placement in Group or Foster Home". Suppose you have a student who is currently living in a traditional foster home. The following steps will assist you in making a determination:

1. Review the current court order, verify the parental rights status of both parents and the court-ordered plan for the student.
2. If biological/adoptive parent's rights have NOT been terminated, the parent continues to have their parental rights and serves as "parent".
3. If parental rights have been terminated, the foster parent may serve as "parent" if they are willing to do so. If not, a special education surrogate parent may be appointed.
4. An employee of DSS CANNOT serve as "parent" or the special education surrogate parent.
5. Group home employees CANNOT serve as "parent" or the **special education surrogate parent**.

The guidance manual includes a section that can be used by LEAs as a handbook for special education surrogate parent volunteers. It is written with the audience of special education surrogate parent volunteers in mind.

The guidance manual includes an example of a welcome letter for the volunteers thanking them for playing an important role in the life of a student with disabilities. This section of the manual is your toolkit for developing a comprehensive special education surrogate parent program!

Who are special education surrogate parents? They are VOLUNTEERS who agree to be responsible to act as **special education** decision-makers for students with disabilities.

Students who need their support:

- Are in state custody
- Are receiving special education services.
- May reside in a variety of living situations, including residential schools, group homes, hospitals or pediatric nursing homes, state institutions, diagnostic placements, shelters, and foster homes.

- May receive their educational services in a variety of settings, including the regular setting at a local public school, a highly structured day school program, or in a private residential facility.

Children and adolescents in the custody of the state have often experienced:

- Numerous traumatic losses and stressful upheavals
- Typically have very few family supports available to help them
- An uphill battle for success every day of their lives

Accessing their specially designed instruction (special education services) as well as access to general education programs, is critical to ensure a positive future for these students.

A Special Education Surrogate Parent is a very unique volunteer position that comes with specific rights, responsibilities and some limitations.

But keep in mind—it is also a very rewarding position!

It is important that school staff recognize that the special education surrogate parent has rights and will be involved in several aspects of the students’ special education program. The special education surrogate parent should receive training about those rights.

School staff should also support the special education surrogate parent in these areas, as well.

It is imperative to have the student’s voice represented in each of these areas of their special education program.

This chart is found in the guidance manual. It informs the volunteer about his or her role as a special education surrogate parent. It also identifies some responsibilities of the LEA and the Department of Social Services social worker or designee.

As a part of their training, LEAs should inform special education surrogate parents about the following duties:

- Request copies of all evaluations and records from the school district
- Sign consent for initial evaluation and re-evaluation
- Meet the student before making any special education decisions
- Visit any proposed educational placements
- Participate as the “parent” in the IEP process
- Request additional special education evaluations as appropriate
- Request an IEP meeting as appropriate
- Request Independent Evaluation as appropriate

- Pursue the appeals process, *if necessary*

The LEA should ensure that the special education surrogate parent is aware of his or her *responsibility* as a volunteer. They are responsible for representing the best interest of the student(s) they are appointed to regarding all aspects of their *special education services*.

Let’s check it off! The responsibilities of the special education surrogate parent may include:

- Receive special education surrogate parent training from a knowledgeable provider.
- Act as a "parent" by fulfilling all rights associated with the role of the special education surrogate parent.
- Advocate for a free and appropriate public education for the student. This should be the priority of the special education surrogate parent volunteers.
- Attend all special education and related meetings for the student.
- Maintain regular communication with the student's providers.
- Monitor the student's progress and special education services.
- Maintain student records in an organized fashion.
- Maintain and respect the confidentiality of all records and information related to the student.
- Return student records in an organized manner when the student no longer needs a special education surrogate parent.

Again, an important reminder:

Special education surrogate parents are NOT expected to:

- Sign classroom and school documents – i.e. permission slips;
- Attend school functions; or
- Provide transportation for the student to school or school functions.

Information in the training will answer these two very important questions for the special education surrogate parent volunteer –

“What do I do after I am appointed?” or “I just received my first Letter of Appointment, and now I am ready to support a student in need . . . now what do I do?”

The training will let the special education surrogate parent know the very important role they have in collaborating and advocating for a student’s special education program. He or she will be a vital member of the student’s Individual Educational Program (IEP) Team.

The Special Education Surrogate Parent Guidelines checklist is included in the manual to provide suggestions to help special education surrogate parents make connections as they begin their duties. These will include:

- Within the LEA's guidelines, meet the student as soon as possible.
- Find the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the major people and agencies involved with the child you will be representing.
- Call the school where the student currently attends. Introduce themselves, explain their role and make an appointment to review the student's entire school records. Find out who's in charge of special education and the names of the persons involved such as: special education teachers, regular teachers, guidance counselor, principal, and the supervisor or director of special education for the school system.
- Call and introduce themselves to the student's "caretaker" (foster parent, group home supervisor, residential director, etc.).
- In addition to learning about the student's educational history, particularly read the current IEP.
- When assigned, request an IEP team meeting to discuss the student's plan.

The guidance manual provides information for volunteers regarding an educational review, the IEP process, and other parent resources, including information regarding dispute resolution.

The guidance manual also includes an Appendix of sample forms. These forms may be helpful to LEAs as they decide how to develop their own procedures regarding the legal mandate for identifying, training and assigning surrogate parents.

Thank you for participating in the online training module for "Special Education Surrogate Parents: Protecting the Student Voice in the Special Education Process".

If you have questions, please contact the Exceptional Children Division at 919.807.3969 for assistance.

