

Caregiver School Advocacy

Quick Information Guide & Resources



Building a Working Relationship

Successful advocacy depends on building positive relationships and working collaboratively with others.

Below are some quick tips in building a working relationship, important things to note, and things to keep in mind:

- Find a preferred method for communication from the start (home book, emails, app, etc)
- Work with the team to develop a plan for any concerns, asking questions as you go
- Complete forms/paperwork early to move forward with supports, as needed
- Bring a calm approach
- Bring a support representative if desired/available

Keep in mind:

- All students have the right to education
- Caregiver consent is required for any modifications to the school day
- IEPs are legal documents for staff working with the student to follow
- Documentation is helpful to ensure plans are aligned and each person is clear on their role

Collaborative School Advocacy

Support Checklist

Below is a Support Checklist that can be used with a case coordinator. This Checklist can be used to support your self advocacy journey.

Not all checklist points are needed but it provides a general overview of transferring support advocacy from the case coordinator to you, the caregiver.

- Provide the case coordinator with names, roles, and contact information of the school team
- The case coordinator will email the school team to set a school meeting
- The case coordinator facilitates the first meeting with agenda points you create together. The case coordinator sends the meeting notes to everyone to document any next steps
- The case coordinator schedules a follow up meeting via email and takes notes during the meeting – you facilitate. The case coordinator sends the meeting notes to everyone to document any next steps
- You schedule a follow up meeting via email and include the case coordinator, to join for note taking needs. You facilitate the meeting. You send the meeting notes to everyone to document any next steps.
- For the next meeting, you schedule and attend the meeting independently, connecting with the case coordinator after to debrief. You send the meeting notes to everyone to document any next steps.
- The case coordinator is no longer involved in school needs

Phase 1

Building a positive relationship with your school team is an important place to start. In Phase 1, you highlight any identifying concerns for the student and address them directly with the immediate school team – the teacher and/or SERT. Reach out to them with a documented communication method (email or messaging app if it's in place) to schedule a sit-down meeting to discuss your concerns.

This meeting will support with:

- Understanding school concerns and perspective
- Allow you to voice your concerns
- Opportunity for questions

Sometimes this can be the only step! You can stop here if your questions are answered, and changes or plans are in motion.

IMPORTANT: Send a follow up email summarizing the meeting and any next steps supports clarity

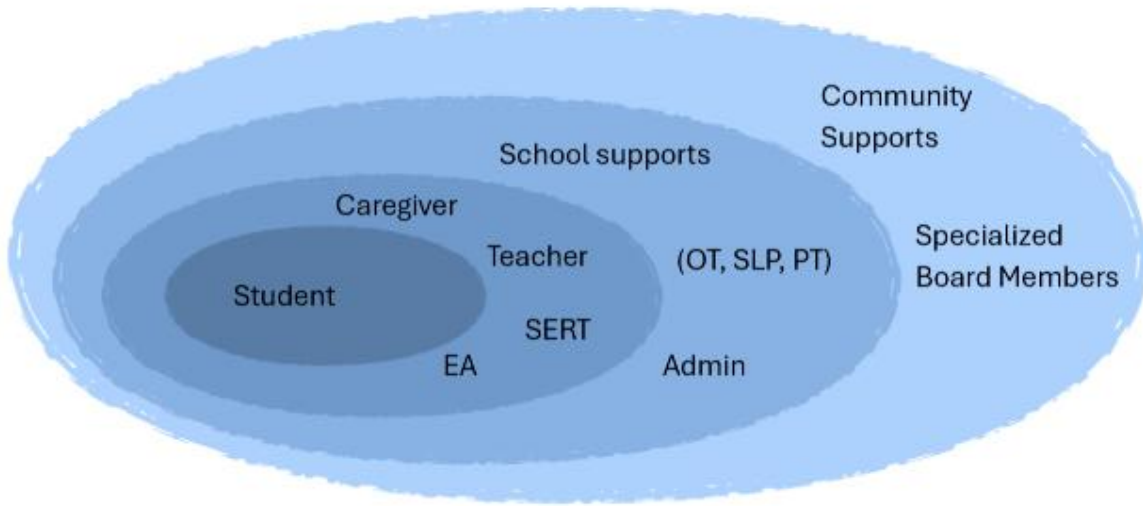
Connected with a Support Worker?

A support worker can help you with establishing an agenda and developing questions for your school team. Service provider can:

- take notes
- keep you on track with questions and concerns
- offer collaborative supports in the community

If more supports are needed, you can move into phase 2.

Your School Team



School:

| ROLE | NAME | CONTACT INFORMATION |
|--|------|---------------------|
| Teacher(s) | | @ # |
| SERT | | @ # |
| Additional Teaching Staff: (EA, alternative teachers) | | @ # |
| Principal | | @ # |
| Vice Principal | | @ # |
| Superintendent for School | | @ # |
| Trustee for School | | @ # |
| Additional Board Staff: | | @ # |

Example email:

Hi [school team member name(s)],

I'm hoping to meet with you to discuss a few concerns for [student name]. There has been ongoing issues with [list concerns so the team has an idea of what you're hoping to resolve], and would like to sit down with [student]'s school team to collaborate on some support ideas that can help them to be more successful at school. Please include any other school team members that I may have missed here that could help with additional ideas and resource options.

[include a few dates and times for availability]

[include whether you have a preference for virtual or in-person options]

Let me know what works best for the school team. I appreciate you working with me to best support [student].

Thank you,

[your name]

General Questions to Consider

What is the current support at school?

What is their daily schedule? (general tasks each period)

What do their academic needs and accommodation look like?

How do they do with transitions?

How do they manage down time/recess/nutrition (often referred to as unstructured time)?

Are there goals for self-regulation or social skill development?

What is the long-term goal (school year/next year/end goal)?

What can be the short-term goals to work towards that?

Meeting Notes

Date: _____

Attendees (name and role on the school team):

Not Able to Attend:

Discussion Points:

Action Steps:

Note:

Immediate Next Steps:

Next Meeting Date: _____

Phase 2

It has been a couple of weeks since the first meeting – ask yourself these few questions:

- Have your concerns been met?
- Has the plan been implemented throughout the last few weeks?
- What has been working and what hasn't been working?
- Are there any current concerns or communication you would like to follow up with?

If there is need for further discussion you can request a follow up meeting with the school team. This may be an appropriate time to invite administrators (principal/vice principal) to attend.

Continue with the same format of requesting the meeting as Phase 1.

The IEP, IPRC, and Classroom Options

This may be a good time to go over some additional support options and the current action plan. Things to consider:

- Review IEP
- Gather supporting documents
- Does the plan meet current/future goals?
- Review classroom placement options

IMPORTANT: The IEP is not a guaranteed document for students with exceptional needs and must be requested from the school if it is not offered directly.

For more information on the IEP and IPRC process, please follow the links below.

[Individual education plans | ontario.ca](#)

[The identification and placement of exceptional students | Special education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12 – Policy and resource guide | ontario.ca](#)

If more supports are needed, you can move into phase 3.

Phase 3

Should you continue to experience ongoing need further options may be explored with the school team and community support providers.

At this time, request another meeting with intentions of exploring specialized support options. Continue with the same format of requesting the meeting as Phase 1.

Within the School Board

Referrals of school board specialists that can provide additional supports while at school are available within a range of eligibility, availability, and referred to by the school team.

These include:

- Occupational therapist
- Speech and language pathology
- Physiotherapist
- Behaviour consultant
- Psychological supports and assessments
- Mental health supports such as a child and youth worker or social worker

Outside the School Board

There are additional options for school-related specialists that are referred to in the community and can work with the student and school team to develop individualized planning and strategies. These may be fee-for-service supports and something to note when seeking those external support options.

These may include:

- Mental health supports
- Tutoring and learning options
- Diagnosis specific strategies and supports
- Advocacy supports

IMPORTANT: Send a follow up email summarizing the meeting and any next steps supports clarity.

Community Referrals

The resources linked below are alternative support options that can be referred to by caregivers, community service providers, or school personnel depending on the eligibility criteria.

These options work alongside the school team to bring a specialized range of education and developmental supports specific to the student into the classroom, collaborating with caregivers and the school team for a fulsome team approach.

If you are connected with a service provider, they can support to provide more information for eligibility and how to move forward with implementing the support options that fit best.

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[Homepage - Empower Simcoe](#)

[Child and Youth Mental Health - Kinark](#)

[Children's Treatment Network - Home](#)

[Home | Parents Against Racism](#)

[Connections for Students | Kinark Autism Services | Child, Youth & Family Autism Programs in Ontario |](#)

[Consultation Services - Kerry's Place](#)

[Immigrant Services | YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka](#)

[SMCDSB Free Tutoring Services - Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board](#)

[New Path Youth and Family Services - Intensive Services For Students \(ISSP\)](#)