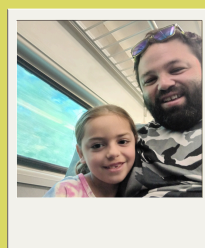


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MEET CHRIS LEBRON

Parent Advocate of the Month

WHAT MADE YOU ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION?



The fact that they were willing to consider expelling a 1st grader. There were issues with their behavior in daycares/ preschool while they were younger and I was always told that the issues were handled and no need to worry, but they also wouldn't nap like the other kids. It was my fault as a parent for not pushing more on what the issues were, but at this stage, I just didn't know what to do. Then onto kindergarten and issues occurring where the district would just transfer them to a different classroom and hope that would change the situation. After the 2nd switch, I started verbally pushing for a CST meeting and evaluation which I continued to get push back for. 1st grade came, the issue's continued and the district finally agreed to CST evaluation. By this point, they were talking about expulsion because my child was considered a safety risk. I contacted PerformCare and got them involved and she was set up to go to an intensive emotional and behavioral program. The evaluation said there were issues but the school stated they were not in need of any special services. But if she received a diagnosis from the program and suggestions when she got back, the CST would take them into full consideration. This is when I started documenting everything realizing the school never documented my child's behaviors and that something was wrong. It was time for me to take control and stop relying on the professionals and make sure my child got the education they deserve.

WHAT DOES BEING YOUR CHILD'S BEST ADVOCATE MEAN TO YOU?

I needed to take control and stop relying on the professionals and make sure my child got the education they should have been receiving, but it was my responsibility to push for their needs and have documentation to back them up. In order to set my child up with the best treatment and education for their future. Also, that they physically represent themselves well, does not mean that they are mentally ok.

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WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER FAMILIES ADVOCATING FOR THEIR CHILD'S RIGHTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION?

- Document, document, document. Get a little book and document your child's behaviors at home and in school. When you get a call from your district, write it down. Who you talked too, what time and day and the issue? Ask questions. When you get a call or message saying your child was "off" that morning or afternoon, how were they off, what happened, what did my child do? Ask questions and document it. What did the school do about it and how did they handle it? Document it.
- Put everything in writing and emails so the school is put in a legally binding position to handle things for your child. Also, have open communication with your child's teacher.
- Don't be upset with your child's teacher even though you might be frustrated with the process, they can be a big benefit in helping advocate for your child's needs. The teacher is the one in the classroom trying to help your child. The administration is focused on the budgets while the teachers are just trying to teach. The teacher is your access into the classroom and another observer of your child's behavior and educational needs and can help with gathering documentation into your child's day at school. The teacher is only following protocols and directions from their administration. So, keep an open line of communication and don't allow your frustration to spill over to them.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO EDUCATE YOURSELF ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Start reading up on the laws that apply to your child. Get a hold of the Parent's Rights in Special Education. Read it. Don't understand the acronyms, learn them. I know when I was first in the room with the CST and some of the words and abbreviations were intimidating. These were the professionals. But educate yourself so the next time you are in that room not only do you understand what the professionals are speaking about but you are also informed and can make proper decisions and have input into your child's education plan and rights because you are the professional of your child.

