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MEET ODALIS REYES

Parent Advocate of the Month

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WHAT MADE YOU ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION?

I became my child's advocate for her education when I realized that no one understood my child's needs as deeply as I did. I noticed gaps between what my child needed to succeed and what was provided in the classroom. It motivated me to speak up ask questions and push for appropriate support. I knew that if I didn't advocate, my child might not receive the services and opportunities she deserves.

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

The best way to educate yourself is to actively seek out reliable information and stay engaged. This includes reading about the special education law, attending the IEP meetings prepared, participating in workshops and connecting with families who have similar experiences. Asking professionals to explain terms and services in plain language is important. The more informed you are, the more confident and effective you can be as an advocate for your child.



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

I would encourage other families to trust their instincts and not be afraid to ask questions. Learn your child's rights under the special education law and keep details records of meetings, evaluation and communications. Approach advocacy as a partnership with the school but remember that it's okay to respectfully disagree when something doesn't feel right. Seeking support from parent groups or advocates can also make the process less overwhelming.

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

Being my child's best advocate means being informed, persistent and collaborative. It means ensuring my child's voice is heard, even when she cannot fully express her needs herself. Advocacy involves building positive relationships with educators, holding high expectations and making decisions based on what will best support my child growth, confidence and dependence. Above all, it means standing up for my child's rights while also celebrating her strengths.

