Navigating Academic Success

**Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

The IEP is a working document that can change, and it should present a program flexible enough to respond to the changing needs and skills of the student with autism. The IEP team can meet to discuss changes or additions to a child’s plan at any time. The child’s parents or school representatives may request a meeting if either party feels the IEP needs to be adjusted to the child’s current needs. Once the IEP is completed, ongoing communication and teamwork between school and parents are essential to a child’s success.

**Mediation**

Mediation is a voluntary process described in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) in which a neutral third party (a mediator) assists parties (parents and the school) in resolving their dispute. All states must have a mediation process that meets the requirements of IDEIA, including having a list of qualified mediators and bearing the cost of the mediation process. Neither party is required to use mediation, and the mediator cannot force either party to accept a resolution to the dispute. If a mutually satisfactory agreement is reached on some or all of the issues, a written agreement is set forth. Discussions that occur in mediation are confidential and may not be used as evidence in subsequent proceedings. Mediation must be available as a dispute resolution option, but may not be used to deny or delay the parental right to a due process hearing.

**Due Process Hearing**

You may request a due process hearing if you do not agree with your child’s identification, evaluation, or educational placement. This is a legal proceeding, and you should obtain legal advice.

**Complaint Resolution Procedures**

Any individual or organization may file a complaint alleging the local educational agency has violated a requirement of IDEIA. The complaint must be written and signed, and must cite the specific IDEIA requirement violated and the facts upon which the allegation is based. The state educational agency must resolve the issues of the complaint within 60 calendar days after it is filed.