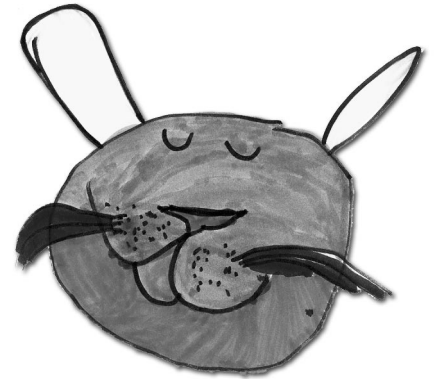


## 2. ADVOCACY

This publication will take the parent or advocate through the educational process and provide the information needed to be a successful advocate for a child in dependency.



**An educational advocate works for the child's best interest to ensure the child's needs are met and educational rights are protected.**

### **An ADVOCATE can be a:**

Foster parent, CASA, social worker, assigned surrogate parent, biological parent, relative care provider, or other caring adult.

### **The child can also be an effective and important advocate.**

Most advocates are not experts in education or child development. Instead, advocates are, or should strive to become, experts on the child. Successful advocates learn about the child's developmental history. They become familiar with the child's experiences, behavior and early environment. Advocates also observe the child, and talk regularly to caregivers, teachers and services providers to make sure the child is doing well. If the child is having problems in any area, the advocate works to provide the child with the help he or she needs to succeed.

### **Effective advocates also:**

- Maintain a positive, child-centered approach to problem solving
- Work to understand all sides of the issues
- Learn to recognize when their own issues, feelings or fears are getting in the way of objectivity
- Try to be realistic, and cooperative when appropriate
- Think "outside the box" to find creative solutions
- Understand the law—which states that all children are entitled to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). This book will help the advocate understand these laws

#### **EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES:**

- **Learn as much as they can about the child**
- **Determine if the child has unmet needs**
- **Work with others to develop a plan to meet those needs – including necessary supports and services**
- **Ensure the child gets those supports and services**
- **Follow up to ensure those supports and services continue to meet the child's needs**

**Effective advocates also educate themselves about the resources within the school and community designed to help children—they then work with others to establish a plan to meet the child's needs.**