

# Empowering Parents So Children Succeed

*A TOOLKIT TO SUPPORT PARENT  
INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION WHEN  
THEIR CHILDREN ARE IN FOSTER CARE*

Advocates for Children of New York  
SCO Family of Services



## About Advocates for Children

Since 1971, Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are at greatest risk for failure or discrimination in school because of their poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or English Language Learner status, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness or involvement in the foster care or juvenile justice systems. AFC achieves this through four integrated strategies: free advice and legal representation to families; free trainings and workshops for parents, communities, educators and other professionals, to equip them to advocate on behalf of students; policy advocacy to effect change in the education system and improve education outcomes; and impact litigation to protect the right to quality education and compel needed reform.

## About SCO Family of Services

SCO Family of Services (SCO) helps vulnerable New Yorkers build a strong foundation for the future. We get young children off to a good start, launch youth into adulthood, stabilize and strengthen families and unlock potential for children and adults with special needs. We enable New Yorkers to meet life's challenges with support, care and acceptance. SCO has played a vital role delivering human services in communities throughout New York City and Long Island for more than 100 years.

SCO's Foster Care practice opened in 1967 and now serves children and families throughout New York City and Long Island. A dedicated Education and Permanency Support team works to ensure children in care receive appropriate academic placement and support, and works to engage families and foster parents as active participants in children's education and success.

© September 2017

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc. & SCO Family of Services

## Acknowledgements

Advocates for Children (AFC) and SCO Family of Services (SCO) developed this resource under the overall guidance of Erika Palmer, Chantal Hamlin, Krista Rose and Stephen Hanmer. We would like to thank Ella Cohen, our spring 2017 Harvard Law School Child Advocacy Program (CAP) intern, who interviewed stakeholders, conducted research and, together with AFC, was the primary author of this report. AFC and SCO would also like to thank all the parents, SCO staff, and other child welfare professionals who contributed to this project for their invaluable input and insight.

Finally, AFC is grateful to the Price Family Foundation and the Ira W. DeCamp Foundation for their commitment to our advocacy on behalf of students impacted by the child welfare system. Their generous support made this report possible.

## A Note on Language

We use the term “parent” in this report and the toolkit that follows to refer to a child’s caregiver prior to entering foster care. We feel that it is important to recognize these individuals as full parents without the need for a qualifying term like “birth parent” or “bio parent.” Using the term “parent” is also more inclusive of adoptive parents and other non-biological parents. While foster parents also play an important role in children’s educational success, they are not the primary focus of this report.

This report and toolkit are available online at [www.sco.org/toolkit](http://www.sco.org/toolkit) and [www.advocatesforchildren.org/policy\\_and\\_initiatives/policy\\_reports](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/policy_and_initiatives/policy_reports).

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Overview</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Key Recommendations</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Actively engage parents in their children’s education throughout their time in foster care, from intake to final discharge.....	3
Incorporate deliberate conversations with parents about education into regular case practice.....	3
Inform parents of their right to be involved in their child’s education.....	4
Support parents’ involvement in their child’s education by consistently sharing school records with parents and facilitating parents’ contact with schools.....	5
Continue to use the special education process as a strategy to engage parents .....	5
Deliberately plan for school before trial discharge and support parents throughout the process .	6
<b>Parent Toolkit</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Appendix A: Parent Engagement Workflow.....	8
Appendix B: Parent Education Bill of Rights .....	11
Appendix C: Talking to Your Child about School .....	13
Appendix D: Translation and Interpretation Services Fact Sheet.....	15
Appendix E: School Template Letter.....	18
Appendix F: School Contacts Sheet.....	21
Appendix G: IEP Information Sheet.....	23
Appendix H: Parent Teacher Conferences Tip Sheet.....	24
Appendix I: Advocates for Children’s Guide to Special Education .....	28
Appendix J: Checklist for Parent Documents.....	29
Appendix K: Online Tools for Locating Community-Based Resources .....	30
Appendix L: Homework Tip Sheet .....	31
Appendix M: Advocates for Children’s Education Helpline Flyer .....	33

## OVERVIEW

Foster care provides a temporary placement for children and youth until they can be safely reunified with their parents or, if that is not possible, placed into an alternative, stable and permanent home. There are currently around 10,000 school-age children in foster care in New York State.<sup>1</sup> Research shows that children and youth in foster care have significantly poorer educational outcomes, and are disproportionately classified as students with disabilities, when compared with their peers who are not in foster care.<sup>2</sup>

As part of an ongoing partnership to improve education support for children in foster care, Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) and SCO Family of Services (SCO) partnered in early 2017 to enhance parent involvement in education for families with children in foster care. The goal of the project was to develop best practices and create resources to help agencies engage and empower parents to improve their children's education experiences while in foster care and on trial discharge.

The following recommendations and resources are based on AFC's and SCO's work together over the last three years as well as recent interviews with key stakeholders, including SCO staff members, parents served by SCO and child welfare professionals at other agencies.<sup>3</sup> AFC also observed family visits, agency planning meetings and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings for students with special education needs over the course of this project.<sup>4</sup>

As the recommendations make clear, foster care agencies can do more to fully engage parents in their children's education while children are in foster care. By emphasizing parents' rights in the education realm, recognizing their input and acknowledging their desire to see their children succeed, we can encourage and empower parents to take a more active role in their children's education when they are apart and be better prepared for when their children return home.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Educational Stability for Youth in Foster Care in New York State*, Presentation to the Board of Regents, December 12, 2016, accessed September 18, 2017, <https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/P-12%20-%20HE%20Foster%20Care%20Deck.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Among the parents interviewed, some had children at home on trial discharge and others had children who were in foster homes. At SCO, we interviewed education specialists, case planners, supervisors, directors, parent advocates and visiting room staff. We also interviewed staff from Leake & Watts, Graham Windham, Brooklyn Defender Services, the Legal Aid Society and the New York Foundling.

<sup>4</sup> Agency meetings included Service Plan Reviews (SPRs), which are periodic conferences that agencies hold for children in foster care, to review the child's wellbeing and parents' progress toward meeting service plan goals. SPRs allow parents, foster parents and children to participate in permanency planning and decision making.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOSTER CARE AGENCIES

### 1. Actively engage parents in their children's education throughout their time in foster care, from intake to final discharge.

SCO staff, parents and outside stakeholders agreed that involving parents in their children's education throughout their time in foster care is key to empowering parents and easing the transition when children return home. Education is an area where parents and agency staff agree: both want children to do well in school. Since parents generally retain their education decision-making rights while their children are in care, agency employees can and do use these rights to engage and empower parents. Further, social science research supports the idea that consulting with parents in areas where they hold power, such as education, can be an effective strategy to promote parent engagement.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, engaging parents in the child welfare process by collaborating with them on issues like education has been linked to improved permanency and child wellbeing.<sup>6</sup>

### 2. Incorporate deliberate conversations with parents about education into regular case practice.

Regular communication is another key to engaging parents in their children's education. Communication between case planners, parents and education specialists should occur as soon as children come into care and should go both ways. Agency staff need to give information to parents while also seeking information from them about children's past educational experiences. See [Appendix A: Parent Engagement Workflow](#). Case planners should incorporate education into their monthly meetings with parents, and education specialists should meet early on with parents of all school-age children, not just when consents are needed or children are struggling in school. Parents can be more involved in school applications, especially when students apply to middle and high school, and children's educational progress should be discussed fully and consistently during all Service Plan Reviews (SPRs) and Family Team Conferences (FTCs).<sup>7</sup> Education specialists should be invited to SPRs and FTCs as well, so they can gather updated school information to share at the meetings and help inform the discussion.

---

<sup>5</sup> Tyler Corwin, *Casey Family Programs: Strategies to Increase Birth Parent Engagement, Partnership, and Leadership in the Child Welfare System: A Review* (Seattle: Casey Family Programs, 2012), 9, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://www.casey.org/media/BirthParentEngagement.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> *Family Engagement: Partnering with Families to Improve Child Welfare Outcomes* (Washington: Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016), accessed May 17, 2017, [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/f\\_fam\\_engagement.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/f_fam_engagement.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> The Family Team Conference (FTC) is a meeting model used by the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to optimize family strengths in the decision-making process when assessing and addressing the family's safety, services, and permanency goals. FTCs bring the extended family, friends, agency staff and community members together to make decisions.

Similarly, agencies should encourage parents to speak regularly with their children about school, during visits and through phone contact. Children in foster care who regularly discuss school with parents and caregivers are more likely to achieve permanency than those who do not discuss their school experiences.<sup>8</sup> Suggested questions to initiate conversations are listed in Appendix C: Talking to Your Child about School.

Agencies can also support parents during visits with homework or other educational activities, like reading with their children, playing educational games or developing early literacy skills. They can designate quiet spaces for homework, provide supplies and materials in the visiting rooms and let parents know that staff are available to help parents with these activities.

### 3. Inform parents of their right to be involved in their child's education.

Agencies should make sure that parents know that, absent any court orders to the contrary, they have the right to get information about their child's school, receive copies of school records, visit their child's school and speak to their child's teachers. See Appendix B: Parent Education Bill of Rights. Since many schools may assume that parents are no longer entitled to information when their children are placed in foster care, agencies should also make sure that schools know about parents' continued right to participate. Agency staff can use form letters that provide parents' contact information and explain the status of the parents' rights, and deliver these letters to schools and parents over the course of the Family Court case. See Appendix E: School Template Letter.

When applicable, agency staff should make sure parents know about their right to translation and interpretation services from school districts.<sup>9</sup> See Appendix D: Translation and Interpretation Services Fact Sheet.

Agencies can also do more to ensure that parents are aware of resources available to them. While some agency staff we interviewed felt that formal workshops on education might be difficult for parents to attend, all staff agreed that parents need additional training and support around education issues. Education specialists can offer this support to parents on an individual basis. First and foremost, education specialists should introduce themselves to parents as soon as their children enter care; case planners can remind parents to contact educational specialists if

---

<sup>8</sup> American Bar Association and Casey Family Programs, *Foster Care & Education Q&A* (Legal Center for Foster Care & Education, 2009), accessed May 17, 2017, [http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/child/education/publications/qa\\_link\\_to\\_permanency\\_final.authcheckdam.pdf](http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/child/education/publications/qa_link_to_permanency_final.authcheckdam.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Federal law requires that all school districts ensure meaningful communication with parents who speak languages other than English. Interpreters should not simply be bilingual staff members; interpreters must be "competent to interpret in and out of English, or to translate documents...[and must be trained] on the role of an interpreter and translator." School districts must ensure communication with parents in a language they can understand. These communications include notices, report cards and paperwork related to special education and related services. School districts must provide translation or interpretation at IEP meetings, parent-teacher conferences and disciplinary hearings. See United States Department of Education, Dear Colleague Letter: English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents, January 2015, accessed May 17, 2017, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>.

they have questions or concerns about school; and education specialists can make themselves available to meet with parents, both at regular meetings and upon request. Education specialists can spend time in visiting rooms during peak hours to reach out to parents, answer questions and offer support. Agencies can also give educational resources to parents at school or agency meetings and prominently display resources in visiting rooms.

#### **4. Support parents' involvement in their child's education by consistently sharing school records with parents and facilitating parents' contact with schools.**

Unless prohibited for safety reasons, all parents should know where their children attend school and how to contact school staff if they have questions or need help. See [Appendix F: School Contact Sheet](#). Agency staff can encourage parents to reach out to schools directly, communicate with teachers and monitor their child's progress. Case planners and education specialists should also make sure parents are invited to parent-teacher conferences, open school nights and other school events. If transportation is a barrier, agencies should provide resources to help parents attend in person, when possible, or arrange a phone conference. If language barriers exist, education specialists should help facilitate qualified interpretation services well in advance of school meetings. Assuming agencies are sharing parents' contact information with schools and explaining that they have the right to attend school events, schools can mail out school calendars to parents and invite them to events as well.

Agency staff also must ensure that parents consistently receive copies of their children's report cards and other important school records. There are a variety of points of contact when staff can share records with parents, including meetings with education specialists, monthly case planner meetings, school meetings, SPRs and FTCs and family visits. If parents need documents translated, agencies can arrange for translation through the child's school.

#### **5. Continue to use the special education process as a strategy to engage parents.**

Because parental consent is required to initiate an IEP or special education evaluations, the special education process, while sometimes overwhelming, also presents a wonderful opportunity for agencies to support and involve parents in their child's education. This involvement is crucial when return to parent is the goal, since the child's special education needs will not disappear upon final discharge, and the parent needs to be prepared to navigate the complexities of the system. Staff must continue to seek birth parent consent for IEPs and should work hard to facilitate parents' in-person attendance at IEP meetings whenever possible. Education specialists should also explain IEPs to parents, including the child's services, the nature and extent of their disability, their current classroom setting, and their progress toward meeting annual goals. The IEP Information Sheet, which should be completed every year with each new IEP, summarizes the key parts of an IEP in an easy-to-read format. See [Appendix G: IEP Information Sheet](#). When children are not in the appropriate school setting, education specialists and other agency staff should work with parents to explain the options available and help advocate for the proper support.



## 6. Deliberately plan for school before trial discharge and support parents throughout the process.

While it can be difficult to predict the exact date of a trial discharge, agencies need to leave adequate time to plan for a child's school placement upon return to their parent, particularly if the child has special education needs. Education specialists need sufficient notice to gather up-to-date information from the child's current school and investigate schools near the parents' home. Education specialists should also attend trial discharge conferences, where all stakeholders can help the parent make an informed decision about where their child will attend school for the remainder of the school year and the coming year.

Child welfare professional interviewed for this project noted that school attendance can suffer during trial discharge, citing transportation barriers as one reason for this decline. Planning for transportation and being proactive about monitoring attendance is especially important in light of the Department of Education's new Tiered Response Protocol, which implements strict attendance reporting for students with active or recent ACS cases and students in foster care, including students on trial discharge.<sup>10</sup> Once a school placement is determined, the agency can develop a transportation plan with the family and set it in motion, as well as consider the child's and family's need for additional resources, like tutoring or an afterschool program.

There are a number of documents, like immunization records, that parents need immediately to enroll their child in a new school. Even when students remain in their school of origin upon trial discharge, parents will need the documents at some point in the future. In addition to this required paperwork, agency staff we interviewed identified a number of other resources that could be helpful to parents. Agencies can create a binder of these school documents to give to parents in preparation for trial discharge. See Appendix J: Checklist for Parent Documents for an example.

---

<sup>10</sup> New York City Department of Education, Memorandum: Joint Statement Introducing a Tiered Response Protocol for High-Risk Cases of Educational Neglect and Unexplained Absence, Gladys Carrión and Carmen Farina, October 29, 2016, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/3A97BB0B-9AD9-42BE-B27B-14E91424005E/0/TieredRespProtocoltruefinal.pdf>.

## PARENT TOOLKIT

Below are reproducible resources to assist foster care agencies in their work to engage and empower parents as partners in their children's education.

Advocates for Children of New York and SCO Family of Services encourage child welfare professionals to use and share these resources.

[Appendix A: Parent Engagement Workflow](#)

[Appendix B: Parent Education Bill of Rights](#)

[Appendix C: Talking to Your Child about School](#)

[Appendix D: Translation and Interpretation Services Fact Sheet](#)

[Appendix E: School Template Letter](#)

[Appendix F: School Contacts Sheet](#)

[Appendix G: IEP Information Sheet](#)

[Appendix H: Parent-Teacher Conferences Tip Sheet](#)

[Appendix I: Advocates for Children's Guide to Special Education](#)

[Appendix J: Checklist for Parent Documents](#)

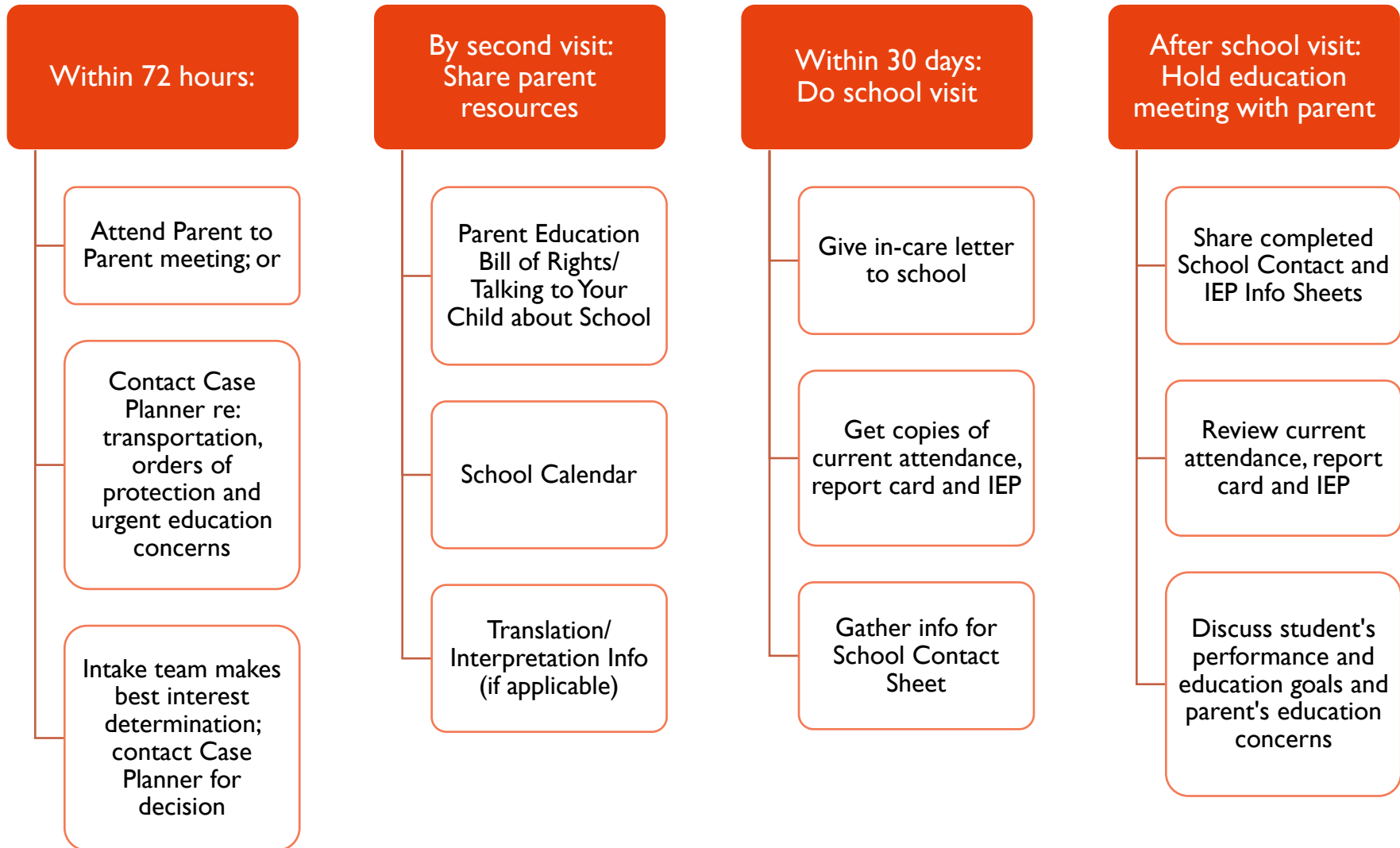
[Appendix K: Online Tools for Locating Community-Based Resources](#)

[Appendix L: Homework Tip Sheet](#)

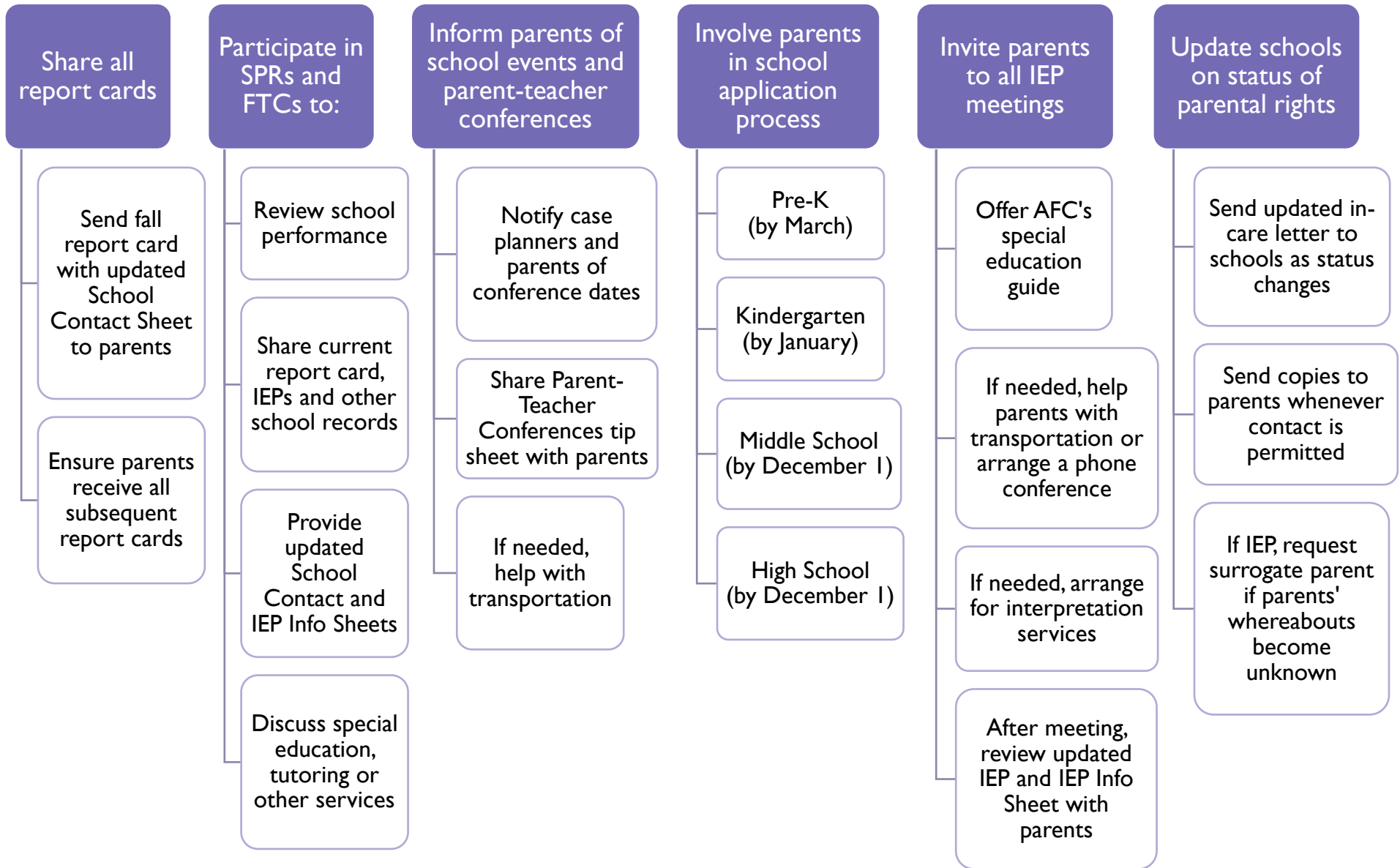
[Appendix M: Advocates for Children's Education Helpline Flyer](#)

# Parent Engagement Workflow

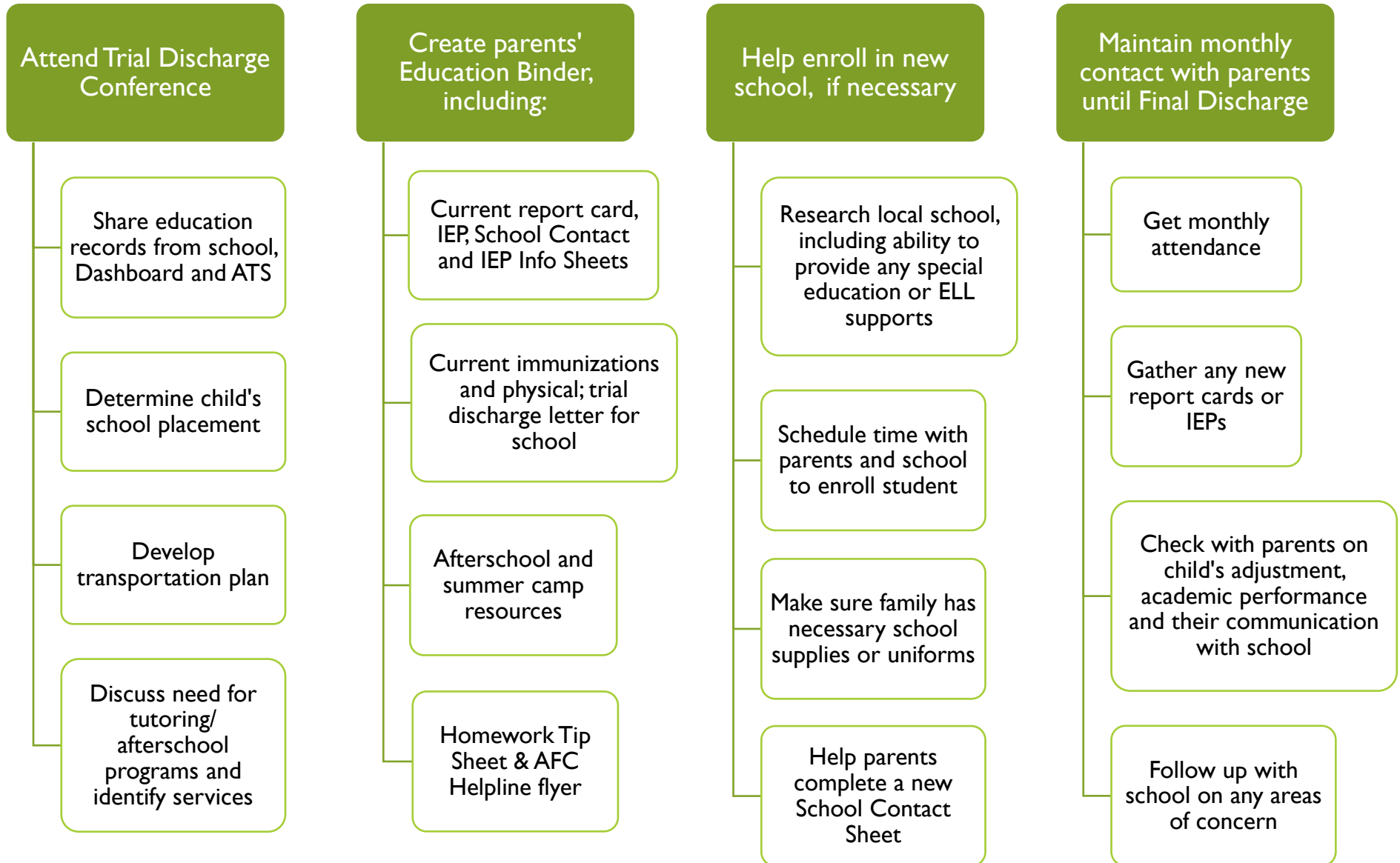
## WHEN A CHILD COMES INTO FOSTER CARE



# THROUGHOUT THE CHILD'S TIME IN FOSTER CARE



## IN PREPARATION FOR TRIAL DISCHARGE



# **PARENT EDUCATION BILL OF RIGHTS**

***You have the right to be involved in your child's education.***

*This means you have the right to:*

1. Know how your child is doing in school.
2. Get copies of school records like report cards, attendance or notices from your child's school.
3. Help decide where your child will go to school, even when your child is in foster care.
4. Go to school meetings and events, including Parent-Teacher Conferences and Open School Night. If you have supervised visits, your caseworker will need to go with you when you go to the school.
5. Have an interpreter who speaks your language at all school meetings. You also have the right to get school records translated into your language.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION RIGHTS**

*You also have the right to:*

1. Consent to or reject special education for your child, unless the court says differently.
2. Be a part of every IEP meeting for your child. You can ask for a new IEP meeting if you don't agree with the IEP.
3. Ask the school to evaluate your child at any time, up to once a year. If you don't agree with the school's evaluation, you can ask for an independent evaluation.
4. Be informed, in writing, before the school changes your child's IEP.
5. Insist that your child gets the special education services they need.

***Questions? Contact your child's Education Specialist.***

My child's Education Specialist: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

# DECLARACIÓN DE DERECHOS EDUCACIONALES DE PADRES

***Tiene el derecho de ser involucrado/a en la educación de su hijo/a.***

*Esto significa que tiene el derecho de:*

1. Saber cómo le va a su hijo/a en la escuela.
2. Obtener copias de registros escolares como los boletines, la lista de asistencia o avisos de la escuela de su hijo/a.
3. Ayudar a decidir a qué escuela irá su hijo/a, incluso cuando su hijo/a está en cuidado temporal.
4. Ir a reuniones y eventos escolares, incluso a conferencias entre padres y maestros y a noches de escuela abierta. Si tiene visitas supervisadas, su asistente social tendrá que ir con usted a la escuela.
5. Tener un intérprete que habla su idioma en todas las reuniones escolares. También tiene el derecho de obtener registros escolares traducidos a su idioma.

## DERECHOS ACERCA DE LA EDUCACIÓN ESPECIAL

*También tiene el derecho de:*

1. Aceptar o rechazar la educación especial para su hijo/a, a no ser que la corte diga lo contrario.
2. Estar presente en cada reunión del Programa Educativo Individualizado (IEP) para su hijo/a. Puede pedir una nueva reunión de IEP si no está de acuerdo con el IEP.
3. Pedir que la escuela evalúe a su hijo/a en cualquier momento, hasta una vez al año. Si no está de acuerdo con la evaluación de la escuela, puede pedir una evaluación independiente.
4. Ser informado/a, por escrito, antes de que la escuela cambie el IEP de su hijo/a.
5. Insistir que su hijo/a obtenga los servicios de educación especial que necesita.

***¿Tiene preguntas? Póngase en contacto con la Especialista de Educación de su hijo/a.***

Especialista de Educación de mi hijo/a: \_\_\_\_\_

Número de teléfono: \_\_\_\_\_

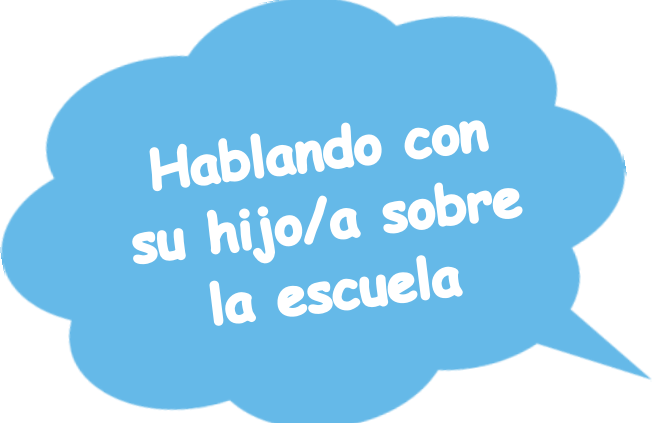


Talking to  
your child  
about school

*You can ask...*

- What was the best thing that happened at school today?
- What was the hardest thing for you to understand today?
- What did you learn about during (ELA/math/science/social studies) today?
- Did you do any science experiments today?
- What was your favorite thing you learned today?
- What book are you reading in school? What is it about? Who are the characters?
- Can you teach me something you learned today?
- Did you learn any new words today?
- What did you do during lunch and recess today? Who did you sit with? Who did you play with?
- Can you share 3 things that happened in school today?





Hablando con  
su hijo/a sobre  
la escuela

### *Puede preguntar...*

- ¿Qué fue lo mejor que pasó hoy en la escuela?
- ¿Qué fue lo más difícil de entender hoy?
- ¿Qué aprendiste hoy durante tus clases (ELA/matemáticas/ciencias/estudios sociales)?
- ¿Qué fue lo que más te gustó aprender hoy?
- ¿Qué libro estas leyendo en la escuela? ¿De qué se trata? ¿Quiénes son los personajes?
- ¿Me puedes enseñar algo que aprendiste hoy?
- ¿Aprendiste algunas palabras nuevas hoy?
- ¿Qué hiciste durante la comida y el recreo hoy? ¿Con quién te sentaste? ¿Con quién jugaste?
- ¿Puedes compartir tres cosas que ocurrieron hoy en la escuela?

## Translation and Interpretation Services in NYC Public Schools

Also available at [http://advocatesforchildren.org/get\\_help/guides\\_and\\_resources](http://advocatesforchildren.org/get_help/guides_and_resources)  
under “Immigrant Students & English Language Learners” in the following languages:

Arabic • Bengali • Chinese • French • Haitian Creole • Korean • Russian • Spanish • Urdu



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

---

## **Translation and Interpretation Services in New York City Public Schools**

In New York City public schools, parents who do not speak English have a right to free translation and interpretation services in order to communicate with their children's schools and other Department of Education (DOE) offices and participate in their children's education. Parents have the right to have their children's school records and other important documents translated into their native language and to have interpreters available at meetings with school and DOE staff.

### ***Who has a right to translation and interpretation services?***

All parents whose primary language is not English have a right to free translation and interpretation services. A student does not need to be identified as an English Language Learner (ELL) for a parent to request translation or interpretation.

Parents should never be told to bring their own interpreters and children should never be asked to translate or interpret for their parents.

### ***In which languages are services available?***

Translation and interpretation must be available in the nine most common languages other than English— Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, Spanish and Urdu. However, all parents, including those who speak other languages, may request translation and interpretation services in their native language.

### ***When is the DOE required to provide translation?***

The DOE must provide translation of all documents containing important information about your child's education in a timely manner. This includes:

- General notices, such as information about parent teacher conferences; student and parent handbooks; and school application forms
- Documents about your child, such as report cards and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

### ***When is the DOE required to provide interpretation?***

The DOE must provide interpretation services so that you can communicate with school staff and DOE staff about your child's education. For example, schools must provide interpretation services at parent-teacher conferences and IEP meetings. Family Welcome Centers must provide interpreters when parents are enrolling their children in school. Superintendents' offices must provide interpreters when parents call with school-related questions.

### ***How do I get these services?***

You should request translation and interpretation services directly from your child's school or the DOE office that you are talking to about your child's education. For interpretation, the DOE may provide interpretation in-person or over-the-phone. Over-the-phone interpretation is available 8 am to 3 pm, Monday through Friday.

Your child's school must determine your primary language and whether you need help communicating with the school within 30 days of your child starting school. Your child's school must also keep a record of your primary language.

All schools must give you a copy of the Parents' Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, which includes information about your right to translation and interpretation services. All schools must also post signs clearly stating that translation and interpretation services are available.

### ***Do schools know that they must provide me with translation and interpretation services?***

Yes! All schools have Language Access Coordinators who educate school staff about their obligation to provide parents with translation and interpretation services.

### ***What should I do if I am not provided translation and interpretation services?***

If you are not provided translation or interpretation or receive poor quality services, please call 311 or the DOE's complaint line at (718) 935-2013.

**Still have questions?**  
**Please Call the Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline**  
Monday through Thursday • 10 am to 4 pm  
1-866-427-6033 (toll free)

This fact sheet does not constitute legal advice. This fact sheet attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of AFC. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.

Copyright © August 2015 by Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.

## School Template Letter

### INSTRUCTIONS:

The following letter is intended for agency staff to complete and share with schools. It indicates the status of parental rights and encourages schools to communicate with parents to the greatest extent permissible. The letter includes a number of different scenarios but cannot capture every possible situation for children in care. Please read the letter carefully when sending it to schools and modify it according to the family's particular circumstances.

1. Fill in the date, school name, address, student's name, DOB, and NYC or other school ID#.
2. Choose the relevant paragraphs in the body of the letter. The choices are color-coded to use as a guide. **GREEN** is for parents with the most access to school staff and records, **PURPLE** is for parents with less access, and **RED** is for parents without any access. A parent's access may involve a combination of "green" and "purple" paragraphs.
3. Once you've selected the relevant paragraphs about parent access to the school, delete each of the other paragraphs that don't apply.
4. Then, check the box at the beginning of the letter that applies to parental decision-making rights. If there is a designee, make sure to write their full name where it says DESIGNEE and to attach a copy of the designation forms to this letter.
5. Finally, go through the letter and replace STUDENT with the child's full name, AGENCY with your agency's name, PARENT with the parent's full name, EDUCATION SPECIALIST with your full name, and CASE PLANNER with the case planner's full name, add phone numbers where a blank space indicates a contact number and choose the correct pronoun where applicable.
6. Change all text to black, and print!

DATE

SCHOOL NAME/NUMBER  
ADDRESS  
CITY, STATE ZIP

Re: STUDENT  
DOB:  
NYCID#:

To Whom It May Concern:

STUDENT is a child in the care and custody of the Commissioner of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), and in foster care with AGENCY. STUDENT's birth parent, PARENT, wants to be involved in their child's education to the greatest extent possible.

- PARENT retains their right to make educational decisions for STUDENT.
- PARENT retains their educational rights but has designated DESIGNEE to make education decisions for this child. A copy of the designation form is included with this letter. While the parent has designated HIS/HER education decision-making rights, please see more information below regarding access to school records and attendance at meetings.

[PARENT retains their parental rights and is interested in learning more about their child's educational progress. PARENT can be contacted at \_\_\_\_\_. Please help PARENT by answering any questions HE/SHE has and giving HIM/HER any education records that are available including, but not limited to, report cards, special education records (IEPs and evaluations), etc. There is no court order prohibiting PARENT from accessing this information. Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), HE/SHE is entitled to this information as a non-custodial parent.]

[There is currently no court order prohibiting PARENT from coming to the school. PARENT should be invited to attend any school-related meetings or events open to all families, such as Parent-Teacher Conferences, and all school meetings specifically related to HIS/HER child, STUDENT.]

[PARENT is currently prohibited by court order from picking the child up from school but can come to the school without a representative from AGENCY. Therefore, PARENT should be invited to participate in-person in any school-related meetings, such as Parent-Teacher Conferences, IEP meetings and all school meetings specifically related to HIS/HER child, STUDENT.]

[PARENT is currently prohibited by court order from coming to the school without a representative from AGENCY, but is not prohibited from having phone contact with school employees. Therefore, PARENT should be invited to participate by phone in any school-related

meetings, such as Parent-Teacher Conferences, IEP meetings and all school meetings specifically related to HIS/HER child, STUDENT. The parent may also attend meetings in-person as long as an AGENCY representative is present.]

[PARENT is currently prohibited by court order from going to the school, having direct contact with the school, or having direct access to educational records. EDUCATION SPECIALIST is the education specialist assigned to STUDENT and CASE PLANNER is the case planner. All communication about STUDENT's educational progress and sharing of education records should be directed to EDUCATION SPECIALIST or CASE PLANNER.]

The fact that this child is in foster care is strictly confidential and should be revealed to school staff on a need-to-know basis only. We appreciate your sensitivity to this issue. You may contact either the education specialist, EDUCATION SPECIALIST, at \_\_\_\_\_ or the case planner, CASE PLANNER at \_\_\_\_\_ if you need any other information. Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

EDUCATION SPECIALIST  
Education Specialist

CASE PLANNER  
Case Planner

# SCHOOL CONTACTS SHEET

<b>SCO Education Specialist:</b> Click here to enter text.	<b>Phone:</b> Click here to enter text.	<b>E-mail:</b> Click here to enter text.
---	--	---

## SCHOOL INFORMATION

Child's Name: Click here to enter text.

Grade: Choose an item.

School: Click here to enter text.

School Address: Click here to enter text.

Phone: Click here to enter text.

Website: Click here to enter text.

---

## IMPORTANT SCHOOL STAFF

Principal: Click here to enter text.

Phone: Click here to enter text.

Email: Click here to enter text.

Guidance Counselor

Social Worker

Name: Click here to enter text.

Phone: Click here to enter text.

Email: Click here to enter text.

Parent Coordinator: Click here to enter text.

Phone: Click here to enter text.

Email: Click here to enter text.

---

## TEACHER(S)

Name: Click here to enter text.

Subject: Click here to enter text.

Phone: Click here to enter text.

Email: Click here to enter text.

---

## UPCOMING DATES

Meeting/Event: Click here to enter text.

Date: Click here to enter a date.

Time: Click here to enter text.

Location: Click here to enter text.

---

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Click here to enter text.



## HOJA DE CONTACTOS DE LA ESCUELA

<b>SCO Especialista de Educación:</b> Click here to enter text.	<b>Teléfono:</b> Click here to enter text.	<b>Correo electrónico:</b> Click here to enter text.
--	---	---

### INFORMACIÓN DE LA ESCUELA

Nombre del niño: Click here to enter text.

Curso: Choose an item.

Escuela: Click here to enter text.

Dirección de la escuela: Click here to enter text.

Teléfono: Click here to enter text.

Página web: Click here to enter text.

---

### EMPLEADOS IMPORTANTES DE LA ESCUELA

Director/a: Click here to enter text.

Teléfono: Click here to enter text.

Correo electrónico: Click here to enter text.

Consejero académico       Trabajador social

Nombre: Click here to enter text.

Teléfono: Click here to enter text.

Correo electrónico: Click here to enter text.

Coordinador de padres: Click here to enter text.

Teléfono: Click here to enter text.

Correo electrónico: Click here to enter text.

---

### MAESTRO(S)

Nombre: Click here to enter text.

Asignatura: Click here to enter text.

Teléfono: Click here to enter text.

Correo electrónico: Click here to enter text.

---

### FECHAS PRÓXIMAS

Reunión/Evento: Click here to enter text.

Fecha: Click here to enter a date.

Hora: Click here to enter text.

Lugar: Click here to enter text.

---

### INFORMACIÓN ADICIONAL

Click here to enter text.

## IEP INFORMATION SHEET

<b>Child's Name:</b> Click here to enter text.	<b>Classification:</b> Choose an item.
<b>Date of last IEP meeting:</b> Click here to enter a date.	<b>Date of next meeting (estimate):</b> Click here to enter a date.
<b>School:</b> Click here to enter text.	<b>Type of school:</b> Choose an item.
<b>Reading level:</b> Choose an item.	<b>Math level:</b> Choose an item.

**Description of student's school strengths:**

Click here to enter text.

**Description of student's school challenges:**

Click here to enter text.

**Classroom setting:**

Click here to enter text.

**Related services:**

Click here to enter text.

**Testing accommodations:**

Click here to enter text.

**Promotion criteria and explanation:**

Click here to enter text.

**Transportation Information:** Choose an item.

**Transportation Accommodations:** Click here to enter text.

<b>School Contact for IEP</b> Name: Click here to enter text. Title: Click here to enter text.	<b>SCO Education Specialist</b> Name: Click here to enter text.
Phone Number: Click here to enter text.	Phone Number: Click here to enter text.
E-mail Address: Click here to enter text.	E-mail Address: Click here to enter text.

---

# 15 Questions to Ask at Parent-Teacher Conferences

---

## ABILITIES AND SKILLS

1. Is my child working to his ability?
2. What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?
3. What skills will my child be expected to master this year in math, English, science and social studies?

## GRADES AND TESTS

4. How are grades determined?
5. Which, if any, standardized tests will be given this year?



## BEHAVIOR AND PARTICIPATION

6. What is my child like in class?
7. How does my child interact with other children?
8. Does my child participate in classroom activities?
9. Does my child obey school rules?
10. Is there anything that I can share with you about what my child is like at home?

## ACADEMIC COMPREHENSION AND PROGRESS

11. Does my child understand what she reads?
12. Can my child express her thoughts and ideas clearly?
13. How is my child progressing academically?

## HOMEWORK

14. How much time should my child be spending on her homework?

## SUPPORT AT HOME

15. What can I do to support my child's learning at home?

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.  
151 West 30th Street, 5th Floor • New York, New York 10001  
Helpline: (866) 427-6033, Monday - Thursday, 10 am to 4 pm



---

## BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

- Talk to your child about how things are going in school.
  - Ask if your child has any questions that he wants you to ask the teacher.
  - Write down a list of questions for your child's teacher.
  - Prepare a list of things you want the teacher to know about your child.
  - Write down your contact information and give it to the teacher at the conference.
- 

---

## DURING THE CONFERENCE

- Make sure you ask the questions that are most important to you first, in case you run out of time.
- If you don't understand something, or would like more of an explanation, ask the teacher to clarify what she means.
- You may want to share with the teacher any information about your home situation that might impact your child's learning (such as a death in the family, divorce, homelessness, etc.).



---

## AFTER THE CONFERENCE

- Talk to your child. Let her know what you learned about her progress in school.
  - Begin right away to work on the plans you and the teacher discussed, like tutoring, enrichment activities, a behavior contract or extra reading.
  - Follow up with a note, email or phone call to thank the teacher and clarify anything that was discussed at the conference that you did not fully understand.
  - Keep in touch with the teacher and don't hesitate to schedule follow-up meetings.
  - If you and the teacher have issues that you could not resolve, ask for help from school staff like the guidance counselor, principal or Parent Coordinator.
  - Keep your contact information current. Let the school know if your phone number, home address or email address changes.
-

---

# 15 Preguntas que Pueda Preguntar a Las Conferencias de Padres y Maestro

---

## HABILIDADES

1. ¿Está mi hijo trabajando a su capacidad?
2. ¿Cuáles son las fuerzas y debilidades académicas de mi hijo?
3. ¿Cuáles habilidades se espera que mi hijo aprenda en matemáticas, inglés, ciencia, y ciencias sociales este año?

## NOTAS Y EXÁMENES

4. ¿Cómo se determinan las notas?
5. ¿Cuáles exámenes estandarizados darán este año?

## COMPORTAMIENTO Y PARTICIPACIÓN

6. ¿Cómo se comporta mi hijo en clase?
7. ¿Cómo trata mi hijo a los otros niños?
8. ¿Participa mi hijo en actividades en la clase?
9. ¿Obedece mi hijo las reglas de la escuela?
10. ¿Hay algo que yo pueda compartir con usted acerca de como mi hijo se comporta en casa?



## PROGRESO ACADÉMICO

11. ¿Entiende mi hijo lo que lee?
12. ¿Puede mi hijo expresar sus pensamientos e ideas con claridad?
13. ¿Cómo está mi hijo progresando en la escuela?

## TAREA DE LA ESCUELA

14. ¿Cuánto tiempo debe pasar mi hijo haciendo tarea?

## APOYO EN CASA

15. ¿Qué puedo hacer para apoyar el aprendizaje de mi hijo en casa?

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.  
151 West 30th Street, 5th Floor • New York, New York 10001  
Helpline: (866) 427-6033, Monday—Thursday, 10 am—4 pm



---

## ANTES DE LA CONFERENCIA

- Hable con su hijo sobre como va todo en la escuela.
  - Pregúntele a su hijo si él/ella tiene preguntas que le gustaría que usted le pregunte al maestro.
  - Escriba una lista de preguntas para hacer al maestro.
  - Prepare una lista de cosas que le gustaría que el maestro sepa sobre su hijo.
  - Escriba su información de contacto para dárselo al maestro en la reunión.
- 

---

## DURANTE LA CONFERENCIA

- Haga las preguntas que son las más importantes para usted primero, por si acaso se acaba el tiempo.
- Si no entiende algo o le gustaría más explicación, pídale al maestro que le aclare.
- Si quiere, puede compartir información sobre aspectos de su situación en casa que pueden impactar el aprendizaje de su hijo (una muerte reciente de un ser querido, divorcio, la falta de vivienda etc...) con el maestro.



---

## DESPUÉS DE LA CONFERENCIA

- Hable con su hijo de lo que usted aprendió sobre su progreso en la escuela.
  - Empiece inmediatamente con los planes que usted y el maestro hicieron; por ejemplo: tutoría, actividades de aprendizaje fuera de la escuela, un contrato de comportamiento o leer más.
  - Haga una carta, un correo electrónico o una llamada al maestro para agradecerle la reunión y aclarar cualquier cosa que hablaron en la reunión que usted no entendió completamente.
  - Mantenga contacto con el maestro y no tenga miedo de pedir otras reuniones.
  - Si usted y el maestro tienen asuntos que ustedes no pudieron resolver, pídale ayuda al personal de la escuela como el consejero, el director o la Coordinadora de los Padres.
  - Mantenga su información de contacto reciente. Infórmele a la escuela si su número de teléfono, dirección o correo electrónico cambia.
-

## Advocates for Children's Guide to Special Education

Available online at [http://advocatesforchildren.org/get\\_help/guides\\_and\\_resources](http://advocatesforchildren.org/get_help/guides_and_resources)  
under "Students with Disabilities" in the following languages:

[Arabic](#) • [Bengali](#) • [Chinese](#) • [English](#) • [Spanish](#)

## Checklist for Parent Documents & Trial Discharge Binder



### ***Documents to give parents when child enters care:***

1. Parent Education Bill of Rights/Talking to Your Child about School
2. School calendar
3. If applicable, Translation and Interpretation Services fact sheet, in the appropriate language

### ***Documents to give parents during the school year (as they become relevant):***

1. Child-Specific Info sheets
  - a. School Contact Sheet
  - b. IEP Information sheet
2. Official School Records:
  - a. Most recent report card
  - b. Most recent IEP
  - c. Any new evaluations, as needed
3. Parent-Teacher Conferences tip sheet
4. AFC's Guide to Special Education

### ***Documents to give parents on or nearing trial discharge:***

1. Everything listed above (unless parent already has up-to-date information)
2. Immunization record and physical
3. Trial discharge letter for school
4. Homework tip sheet
5. AFC Education Helpline flyer
6. Community-based resources, such as tutoring, summer camps or afterschool programs, as appropriate



## Online Tools for Locating Community-Based Resources

1. Department of Youth & Community Development search page for afterschool programs and summer programs: <http://www.dycdportal.nyc/discoverdycd/home>
2. Fresh Air Fund Application: <http://www.freshair.org/get-an-application>
3. Department of Education School Calendar: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Calendar/default.htm>
4. Information on Free Summer Meals: <http://www.schoolfoodnyc.org/>
5. NYC Parks Department Summer Camp Information: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/reg/summercamp>
6. NYC Parks Department Afterschool Programs Information: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/programs/recreation/afterschool>
7. Police Athletic League (PAL) Summer Camp Information: <http://www.palnyc.org/summer-camps/>
8. PAL Afterschool Programs Information: <http://www.palnyc.org/afterschool-program/>
9. Department of Health Childcare Connect search page for child care centers: <https://a816-healthpsi.nyc.gov/ChildCare/ChildCareList.do>



# Tips

**Create a homework spot** where your child will work each day. Try to choose a spot with minimal distractions.

**Establish a routine** for what time homework will be done every day and stick to it.

**Create a homework log** to keep track of what homework is assigned. Ask your child's teachers to initial it daily.

**Stay close by.** Watch your child to make sure he or she understands the homework assignment. If they don't, do a few questions together. You can also call the UFT Homework Helpline, Dial-A-Teacher, at (212) 777-3380 for extra help.

**Contact the teacher right away** if your child is having trouble understanding his or her assignments. Your child may need extra help or services in school.

**Keep rewards simple.** If your child needs incentives, try making a stamp or sticker chart with a small but meaningful reward at the end of the week or month.

**Give specific praise.** Praising specific behaviors encourages good habits. "I like how you are focusing" or "Great job sounding out that word" give children more cues than "Good boy/girl" or "You are so smart."

**Show your child that homework is important.** If your child does his or her homework at an afterschool program or while you are at work, ask to see your child's finished work when you get home to make sure s/he is on the right track.

**Schedule breaks.** If your child has more than 30 minutes of homework, set a timer so your child knows when s/he will get a short break. Try stretching or doing jumping jacks during a break!



**Don't let your child do homework by the TV or other distractions.**

**Don't leave homework for the last task of the day.** This sends the message that homework is not as important as other activities.

**Don't do homework for your child.** Encourage your child to work independently. Homework should be based on what s/he already learned at school. Give help only after your child makes an effort on his or her own. If the work is too difficult, talk to your child's teacher immediately.

**Don't make it a race.** Encourage your child to take their time and put forth their best effort.



# CONSEJOS PARA HACER LAS TAREAS DE ESCUELA

**Cree un lugar para hacer la tarea** donde su hijo puede trabajar cada día. Elija un lugar con distracciones mínimas.

**Establezca un programa** y decida a qué hora la tarea debe ser terminada cada día. Sea consistente.

**Cree un registro de tarea** para seguir la tarea que ha sido asignada. Pida que el maestro de su hijo/a firme el registro diariamente.

**Quedese cerca de su hijo/a.** Mire constantemente a su hijo/a para determinar si él/ella entiende la tarea. Si él/ella no entiende, haga algunas preguntas juntas. Puede llamar el UFT Homework Helpline, Dial-A-Teacher, a (212) 777-3380 para más ayuda.

**Contacte el maestro de su hijo/a** si su hijo/a tiene dificultades. Es posible que su hijo/a necesite más ayuda o servicios en la escuela.

**Dele premios simples.** Si su hijo/a necesita incentivos, trata de hacer una tabla de pegatinas con un pequeño premio pero significativo al fin de la semana o el mes.

**Elogie comportamientos específicos.** Elogiar comportamientos específicos estimula buenas costumbres. “Me gusta cómo te estás concentrando” o “Buen trabajo de deletrear esta palabra” les da a los niños más información que “Buen chico o buena chica” o “Eres muy inteligente.”

**Demuestre a su hijo/a que la tarea es importante.** Si su hijo/a hacer su tarea cuando usted no está presente, asegúrese de siempre pedir para ver la tarea para asegurarse de que están en el buen camino.

**Programe descansos.** Si su hijo/a tiene más de 30 minutos de tarea, dele a su hijo/a un descanso corto. ¡Durante el descanso, él/ella puede estirarse o hacer una forma de ejercicio (como los jumping jacks)!



**No permita su hijo/a hacer la tarea cerca de la TV** u otras distracciones.

**No haga la tarea como última actividad del día.**

Esto manda el mensaje a su hijo/a que la tarea es menos importante que otras actividades.

**No haga la tarea para su hijo/a.** Anime su hijo/a a trabajar independientemente.

La tarea debe ser basada en lo que él/ella está aprendiendo en la escuela.

Ayude a su hijo/a solo después que él/ella ha hecho un esfuerzo de hacerla independientemente. Si la tarea es demasiado difícil, hable inmediatamente con el maestro de su hijo/a.

**No lo haga una carrera.**

Anime su hijo/a a tomar su tiempo y poner su mejor esfuerzo en su trabajo.





Advocates for Children of New York  
Protecting every child's right to learn

---

## THE JILL CHAIFETZ EDUCATION HELPLINE

**(866) 427-6033**  
**Monday — Thursday**  
**10:00 am — 4:00 pm**

*AFC's Education Helpline provides answers to your school-related questions, including:*

- ✓ The best school programs for a child
- ✓ Options for a student in need of medical accommodations
- ✓ School transfers
- ✓ Special education evaluations, programs, and services
- ✓ Promotional standards and graduation requirements
- ✓ Timing of school selection processes
- ✓ Options available in bilingual education and ENL
- ✓ School discipline and suspension issues

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.  
151 West 30<sup>th</sup> Street, 5th Floor • New York, NY 10001  
[www.advocatesforchildren.org](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org)



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

## LA LÍNEA DE AYUDA EDUCATIVA EN MEMORIA DE JILL CHAIFETZ

**(866) 427-6033**  
**Lunes a Jueves**  
**10:00 am a las 4:00 pm**

*La línea de ayuda de AFC provee respuestas a sus preguntas relacionadas con la escuela, incluyendo:*

- ✓ Los mejores programas escolares para un niño(a)
- ✓ Opciones para estudiantes quienes necesitan acomodaciones médicas
- ✓ Transferencias escolares
- ✓ Evaluaciones, programas y servicios de educación especial
- ✓ El criterio de promoción y el horario de los exámenes especializados para la secundaria
- ✓ Opciones para la educación bilingüe e inglés como segundo idioma
- ✓ Asuntos de disciplina y suspensiones escolares

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.  
151 West 30<sup>th</sup> Street, 5th Floor • New York, NY 10001  
[www.advocatesforchildren.org](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org)