

Dialogue Guides: Promoting Home-School Partnership for Students with Disabilities

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Parents, educators, health-care providers and wellinformed consumers are finding creative ways to address the needs and daily challenges of those who struggle with AD/HD. In each issue of Attention, we highlight one innovative program, model, or practice and pass on appropriate contacts so you can implement similar efforts in your community. Appearance in this column, however, does not imply endorsement by CHADD.

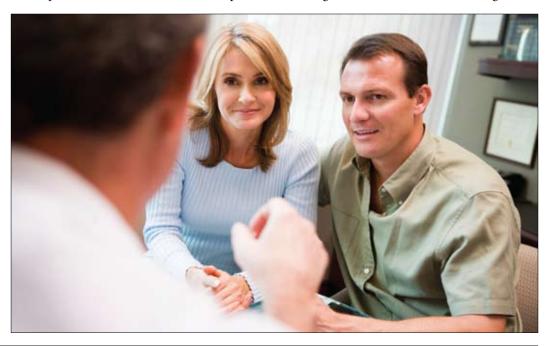
THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT (IDEA)

guarantees children and youth with disabilities, including eligible students with AD/HD, the right to a free appropriate public education. However, disagreements sometimes arise among families, schools, service providers, and others about a student's needs and services, and that can foster ill will and discourage partnerships among stakeholders that support learning for children with disabilities.

A free, online resource from the IDEA Partnership (www.ideapartnership.org), *Dialogue Guides* are designed to bring these cross-stakeholders together for meaningful dialogue on issues to ensure that students with disabilities receive a high-quality education that meets their needs and prepares them for postsecondary school or training, employment, and life in the community. *Dialogue Guides* provide a model for interactive, respectful

discussion of special education issues and a tool for informed decision-making and collaborative problem-solving across stakeholder groups.

Dialogue differs from debate and discussion in that its goal is not to convince others that a position is correct or to provide information that can be accepted or rejected, but to jointly explore and question assumptions, create a shared understanding and vision, build consensus, generate





solutions, and prompt action on issues of mutual importance to stakeholders. The cooperative, collaborative nature of the dialogue process helps cross-stakeholders find common ground and work together on even the most difficult, contentious, and emotional special education issues.

Dialogue Guide topics are focused on key changes and provisions in the IDEA 2004 statute and regulations (for example, alignment with the No Child Left Behind Act, Individualized Education Program, Highly Qualified Teachers, Disproportionality and Overrepresentation, and so forth). Guides are currently available on twenty statutory provisions, nineteen regulatory provisions, and three topical documents developed by federal centers and agencies.

Each *Guide* is part of a complete information package that includes the full text of the law or regulation pertaining to the selected topic, the text on the specific provision of interest with dialogue starter questions, and a *Facilitator's Handbook*, which explains the dialogue process in detail and includes directions and suggestions for organizing, convening, and leading dialogue activities. Two types of dialogue starter questions—reaction and application questions—encourage participants to share perspectives on what the provision means to different stakeholders and to discuss practical issues relating to implementation. Facilitators can also help groups generate their own reaction and application questions for the dialogue activity.

Links are provided to a wealth of related materials and resources from state and federal agencies, federal research and technical assistance centers, and IDEA Partnership organizations, which can be used for background information or for exploring issues in greater depth. In addition, the complete set of *Dialogue Guides* and the *Facilitator's Handbook* are available on the U.S. Department of Education's IDEA Web site (http://idea.ed.gov), accompanied by corresponding Topic Briefs and other helpful resources, such as training materials and video presentations on the topic.

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), as the lead agency for the IDEA Partnership grant, spearheaded the development of the *Dialogue Guides*. The initiative was supported with funding from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, and national stakeholder organizations and agencies in the IDEA Partnership, including CHADD, were integrally involved in the work. CHADD's designee to the project participated in reviewing materials and writing dialogue starters for many of the *Dialogue Guides*, ensuring that the perspective of children and families with AD/HD was considered and represented in the final product. **4**

Ways to Use Dialogue Guides

Dialogue Guides can be used by schools, families, and communities in a variety of ways and settings:

- Schools and families can use them as a tool for school improvement and to make decisions about activities for consolidated plans.
- Parent-teacher organizations can use them to learn about provisions or changes in IDEA and share perspectives about how these provisions or changes might affect students, families, and teachers.
- > Parents or caregivers can use them to educate themselves about IDEA, so they can better advocate for their child.
- ➤ CHADD chapters, satellites, and support groups can use them as mini-workshops or program topics for meetings.
- > Service providers can use them as a reference when developing treatment plans.