

## What should I do if I want to be a surrogate parent, or if I have additional questions?

For information about becoming or remaining a surrogate parent, contact the principal at your child's school, the special education director at your local school district, or your education service center.

Useful information about special education in general can be found at the Texas Education Agency website at [www.tea.state.tx.us](http://www.tea.state.tx.us) or Texas Project FIRST at [www.texasprojectfirst.org](http://www.texasprojectfirst.org)



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## What is a Surrogate Parent?



Statewide Parent Involvement Network

## What is a surrogate parent?

The individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that state and local school systems involve parents in decisions regarding their child needs. In cases where the child has no parents, none can be located, or the child is a ward of the state, a parent surrogate must be appointed to represent the child and Project the child's rights in matters relating to identification, evaluation, and placement in a special education program. A surrogate parent must also complete required training regarding Special Education laws, rules, procedures, and due process rights pertaining to a child with a disability and be willing to put in the time to adequately represent the best interests of the child.

## Who cannot be a surrogate parent?

Anyone who is an employee of the state education agency, the local school district or any agency that is involved in the education or care of the child and anyone who has a conflict with the interests of the child cannot serve as a surrogate parent.



## What are the responsibilities of a surrogate parent?

In Texas, surrogate parents are required to:

- Complete a training program as described in Commissioner's Rules Concerning Special Education.
- Visit the child and the child's school.
- Consult with persons involved in the child's education.
- Review the child's educational records.
- Attend educational planning and decision making meetings.
- Exercise independent judgment in pursuing the child's interests.
- Exercise the child's due process rights.

Additional activities for a surrogate parent include:

- Learn about the student's background and educational history.
- Know the child's interests, strengths and weaknesses.
- Observe the child at school and in other environments.
- Meet with the child's teacher(s), principal and other professionals working with the child.
- Keep a record or file of all written information received from school personnel.
- Review school records, particularly the current evaluation, placements, and services.

- Maintain confidentiality to protect the student's privacy.
- Ask questions concerning anything you do not understand.
- Be familiar with all aspects of the child to become an effective and informed advocate.

## What specifically, does a surrogate parent need to know?

- Identification of a student with a disability.
- Collection of evaluation and reevaluation data relating to a student with a disability.
- Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee process.
- Development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and, for a student who is at least 16 years of age, and Transition services.
- Determination of least restrictive environment (LRE).
- Implementation of an IEP.
- Procedural rights and safeguards.
- Sources that the surrogate parent may contact to obtain assistance in understanding the laws, rules and regulations relating to students with disabilities.