



Families Helping Families Resource & Recreation Center

The IEP Specialists

Educational Consultants & Child Advocates

Serving Children with Special Needs and Their Families

## PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES

Please note that with exception to any consultation appointment, advocacy services cannot be rendered without a signed Advocacy Contract submitted to the FHF offices. Contracts must be accompanied by a start-up packet (for new clients) and a packet review fee (or contract renewal fee if applicable), as defined in the Fee Schedule. All paperwork must be hard copies; we cannot accept any documents via email attachments or fax. Please note that a contract is only valid for one full school year and must be renewed yearly.



### Hours:

The FHF advocate meets with parents and attends school based meetings through scheduled appointments only. Although FHF staff members work every public school day Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM until 5:00 PM, their work is in the field (school based meetings, workshops, hearings, etc.) during the bulk of those hours. FHF has set aside designated “Advocate Live Phone Hours” for clients to be able to briefly speak with the advocate in order to discuss time urgent matters or ask a brief question. These hours are stated below.

### Phone Hours:

- Advocate Live Phone Hours are from 7:00 AM until 8:20 AM public school days only. This time is reserved for clients only. All calls during this time will be limited in length to allow other clients to have access to the advocate.
- Due to staff limitations, all voice mail messages and/or emails will be returned by an FHF staff member within three public school days.
- PLEASE NOTE: Due to the high volume of phone calls and messages, parents are limited to leaving only one phone voice mail message per day.
- The advocate is usually in the field from 8:30am – 5:00pm and has limited phone availability during the business day.
- It is always the parent’s responsibility to follow up the next business day after leaving a message.

### Consultations:

- Clients will be seen by appointment only.
- “Walk-In” appointments are NOT permitted.
- Children are NOT permitted to attend meetings at the FHF office.
- In-office consultations are scheduled for a minimum of 45 minutes or longer
- 15 and 30-minute phone consultations are also available, but must be paid for in advance (see fee schedule).

### Appointments and Meetings:

First and foremost, if you want an advocate to accompany you to your child's IEP meeting or other school based meetings do NOT accept the appointment date offered to you by the school without first checking the advocate's availability. Please be aware that in most cases the advocate is booked at least 3 weeks in advance. You will need to be proactive and ask your school based team well in advance of your child's annual review date to give you available meeting dates to choose from. It is advised that you notify your child's teacher/provider at least two months before the review date (listed in the upper right hand corner of the IEP), that you need a list of available meeting dates.

### Confirming Appointments with the FHF Advocate:

All clients *must confirm* any meetings/appointments by phone *twice*. The first of these two confirming phone calls must be made during morning phone hours on the school day immediately prior to the scheduled meeting date. The second phone call must be made during morning call hours the morning of the scheduled meeting date. These confirmation calls must be made during the FHF “Advocate Live Phone Hours” stated above. The first confirmation call may be left in a voice-mail message. The second call must be a “voice-to-voice” phone call so that you and the advocate can make meeting related arrangements (see: *Off-Site Meeting Protocol*). Please be aware that if you neglect to “double confirm” your meeting date and time your appointment will be considered “unconfirmed” and you will be taking the chance that your appointment date and time might be allocated to another client in need on the meeting waiting list.

### Fee Policy:

Please see the document titled “Fee Schedule” prior to signing the contract in order to understand the cost of each service. Payment is due at the time that services are rendered. After forty five (45) days from the date of service, a \$50.00 late fee will be applied monthly for all outstanding balances. No new appointments will be made until the client carries a zero balance. A bounced check fee of \$35.00 will apply to all bounced checks. If a check bounces, all future payments must be made by cash, money order, or a certified teller’s check. A 4% discount will be applied to all bills paid by check, money order or cash. All checks and money orders must be payable to Families Helping Families or FHF.

*Sliding fees and/or fee waivers are available upon evidence of financial need (tax returns, federal assistance statements, etc.)*

### Off-site Meeting Protocol:

The FHF advocate has severe physical and medical disabilities which prevent her from walking even short distances. Her disability, compounded by the parking challenges in areas around school buildings, make it almost impossible for her to walk from her car to

### Off-site Meeting Protocol (continued):

the meeting site. Because of this, part of your responsibility regarding her attendance at your meeting will be to provide her transportation from her parking spot to the front door of the school. One of the purposes of the second “Day Of” confirmation call is to make these transportation arrangements with the advocate.

### Cancellation Policy:

We ask that you notify FHF immediately if you need to cancel an appointment. If you neglect to notify FHF that you are canceling your appointment at least 24 hours before the meeting, all standard FHF fees for that meeting will apply. The fees must be paid prior to FHF rescheduling your next appointment.

### Information Packet:

Please note that all documents that you send to the FHF office must be PHOTOCOPIES ONLY (no original documents). Also note that all documents will be shredded within 3 months of receipt if you do not make follow-up contact.

### Suggested Packet Documents:

- A cover letter stating your concerns.
- Copies of your child's IEPs for the last 2 years, including the most recent IEP.
- Copies of your child's last 2 years of report cards.
- If applicable, copies of all New York State testing scores and graphs, as available at school or on the ARIS website.
- Copy of your child's most recent evaluations.
- Copy of medical reports, including diagnosis.
- Copy of any other relevant information pertaining to your child's educational needs.

### Packet Delivery:

- Please mail or hand deliver the packet directly to the FHF office address.

#### When hand delivering:

- Place packet directly in the locked white mailbox (the pull-down handle faces the street).
- Do NOT ring the bell.

#### When mailing packet:

- To ensure timely receipt, do NOT make delivery contingent upon a signature.
- It is your responsibility call the FHF office within two school days following the packet's arrival to continue with your case. Do not expect an FHF staff member to call you.

**As the parent, you are your child's primary advocate and case manager. Please understand that you are contracting FHF to co-advocate with you for your child. You need to consider yourself a partner in the rolls and responsibilities in obtaining your child's free and appropriate public education.**