

---

# Top 10 Best Advocacy Practices

*Contributed by Jeffery A. Fernengel, Advocate*

---

Advocacy is a team effort. Here are some simple yet empowering best practices that can really take your advocacy to the next level!

## **1. Be prepared**

If you are not prepared for the meeting, how can your advocate be prepared? Request copies of the IEP, testing, and any other useful documentation well before an IEP meeting. If you are having trouble getting some of the paperwork, your advocate will be happy to help.

## **2. Communication is king**

The advocate relies on communication from the parent to connect with the IEP team. If the parent does not communicate with the advocate, things are likely to slip through the cracks.

## **3. Provide advance notice**

Your advocate has a large caseload, so try to give him/her advance notice so s/he can be sure to make the meeting. If possible, have your advocate included in the original planning and scheduling of the meeting. As we all know, IEP team members can get grumpy when the meeting day and time change frequently.

## **4. Collaboration can help**

If you are upset with school personnel, don't be afraid to run your email by your advocate to make sure the tone is professional and your emotions do not get in the way of your message.

## **5. Freshen up**

If you have not seen your advocate in a while, set up an office visit a week or two prior to the IEP meeting to insure you both are on the same page. New information will be helpful to your advocate; share it! This freshen-up meeting also gives you and your advocate a chance to re-familiarize yourselves with the case and to create realistic goals which can only lead to stronger advocacy.

## **6. Be authentic**

Bring your child in to meet your advocate. It is much easier to come up with unique ideas when your advocate has met your child. Such a meeting can create a stronger connection between your advocate, your child, and his/her needs.

## **7. Include all who are important to your child**

Many times there are important people outside of school who have meaningful connections to your child. Whether it is an outside OT, PT, or family friend, they have the right to be invited and included in the meeting, and may offer valuable insights.

## **8. Ask questions**

If there are things that you would like to learn or understand in regards to special education, ask your advocate. We are here to help teach you what you need to know to better advocate for your child. Your advocate will be happy to send you information or have open conversations outside of IEP meetings.

## **9. Practice patience**

It can take a long time to develop a working relationship with your school and IEP team. So give yourself and your advocate time to improve communication with the team. Do not give up quickly if things do not go the way you had hoped and planned. Your advocate will not give up as long as you maintain your relationship with The Arc of Aurora.

## **10. Smile**

Your advocate understands that you may be in a difficult situation and the stress that comes with it. However, try to smile and share some positive moments with your advocate. Positivity helps to create solutions!

Keep this top ten list in mind as our summer fades away, and don't forget to schedule a time to meet with your Arc of Aurora advocate to discuss your goals for the upcoming school year.