

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN ALABAMA

A Right NOT A FAVOR



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This manual provides information about special education law. However, legal information is not the same as legal advice - the application of law to an individual child's specific circumstances. The Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program recommends that you consult a lawyer if you want professional assurance that this information, and your interpretation of it, is appropriate to your particular situation.

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The Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP) is part of the nationwide federally mandated protection and advocacy (P&A) system.

ADAP's mission is to provide quality, legally-based advocacy services to Alabamians with disabilities in order to protect, promote and expand their rights.

ADAP's vision is one of a society where persons with disabilities are valued, exercise self-determination through meaningful choices and have equality of opportunity.

ADAP's advocacy efforts are governed by these values:

- Persons with disabilities should have the same opportunity to participate in the community as persons without disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities have the right to reasonable accommodations that are needed for full participation.
- Persons with disabilities have the right to be afforded meaningful choices and to make informed decisions.

ADAP provides information and referral services, public education programs, and individual case advocacy services.

Information and Referral

Anyone may call ADAP for information and referral services relating to disability issues.

Education and Training

Any individual or group may request training in the area of disability rights. Requests are considered in light of ADAP's annual priorities and its limited resources for public education programming.

Individual Case Advocacy

ADAP provides individual case advocacy services in light of the agency's priorities and case selection criteria. For information about individual case advocacy services, contact ADAP at 1-800-826-1675.



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Introduction

Children with disabilities in Alabama have a legal right to free and appropriate programs of special education and related services. State and federal law require teachers and school administrators to work together with parents to create individualized education programs to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities. Thus, when schools provide special education, they do so not out of kindness, but because children with disabilities are entitled by law to these services. In other words, **SPECIAL EDUCATION IS A RIGHT, NOT A FAVOR.**

The purpose of this manual is to help parents understand their children's rights to such services, learn how to advocate for those rights, and understand how best to partner with school personnel, so that when their children graduate from school, they are prepared to lead productive and independent adult lives, to the maximum extent possible.