

Surrogate Parents

- A surrogate parent is an adult, other than a child's parent, appointed to assume responsibility relating to the educational interests of a student who may be or who has been determined eligible for special education and related services, for whom no parent or guardian can be identified, or their whereabouts are unknown, or the child is a ward of the state. Surrogate parents in Susquehanna Township School District are volunteers who are trained by Capital Area Intermediate Unit staff to serve in this capacity.

SURROGATE PARENT QUALIFICATIONS

- Be a volunteer
- Be a person of good character
- Have no personal or professional interest that conflicts with the interests of the child
- Has knowledge and skills that ensure adequate representation of the child
- Be at least 18 years old
- Is capable of understanding the cultural and linguistic background of the child
- Is not an employee of STSD or any other agency (public or private) involved in the education or care of the child
- Be committed to becoming acquainted with the student's educational needs and with Pennsylvania's educational system

SURROGATE PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS

The surrogate parent represents the child in all matters relating to the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a FAPE. Activities that surrogate parents may be involved in include, but are not limited to, giving or refusing consent for the initial evaluation, reevaluations, and initial placement of the child in special education; reviewing all educational records and reports related to the child participating in and contributing to the child's evaluation, eligibility determination, and placement; participating in the development, review, and revision of the child's individualized education program (IEP); and initiating dispute resolution proceedings (e.g. filing a written complaint or requesting mediation or a due process hearing) when disputes arise concerning the identification, evaluation, placement, or provision of a FAPE.

APPOINTMENT AND OVERSIGHT OF SURROGATE PARENTS

Any of the following who knows a child needing special education services, knows that the parents or guardians are either not known, cannot be located, or that the child is a ward of the state may file a request for the assignment of a surrogate parent.

- Employee of the District, or a public agency,
- PDE,
- A residential school,
- Hospital or physician,
- Judicial officer, or
- Other person whose work involves the education/treatment of children educational process

The District is required to appoint a surrogate parent. Surrogate parents will be selected by the District (Special Education Supervisor or his/her designee). The District will maintain a list of people eligible to serve as surrogate parents. However, in the case of a child who is a ward of the state, the surrogate parent may be appointed by the judge overseeing the child's case, as long as the surrogate meets the requirements of a surrogate parent. Assignment of the surrogate parent will be made within 30 days after there is a determination by the District that the child needs a surrogate. Written request for the appointment of a surrogate parent is encouraged, but not required. Documentation of verbal requests will be noted within the student's file.

The District is responsible for providing oversight to ensure that the appointment of a surrogate parent is appropriate and that the representation provided by a surrogate parent is adequate. Also, both the PDE and the District are responsible for providing oversight to ensure that the Districts comply with both federal and state requirements related to surrogate parents.

TERMINATION

The surrogate parent continues in his/her appointed role until:

- The child is determined to be no longer eligible for special education and related services,
- The legal guardianship of the child is assigned to a person who is able to assume the role of parent,

- Either the identity or the whereabouts of the parent that was previously unknown becomes known,
- The child reaches the age of majority and rights transfer to the student, or
- A need to appoint a different surrogate parent arises.

The District will give notice to the surrogate parent in writing at the termination of a surrogate parent's appointment and identify the reason(s) for the termination.

If you or someone you know have an interest in serving as a Surrogate Parent in Susquehanna Township School District, please visit the CAIU link regarding Surrogate Parents.

[https://www.caiu.org/Schools_and_Districts/resources/surrogate-parents-program.](https://www.caiu.org/Schools_and_Districts/resources/surrogate-parents-program)