

Who Can Be a Surrogate Parent?

Recruitment

Some students who need surrogates already have adults in their homes who are eligible to be their surrogate. An adult who has voluntarily taken on the responsibility of the care of the child may serve as the child's surrogate parent. Included in this group are foster parents. These adults, who already have a relationship with the student, will be the first approached to serve as the surrogate parent. If the household adult refuses the request, or if there is no adult in the household, the surrogate parent will be recruited from the general population. Every school district in Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV has been included in the recruitment of potential surrogate parents for identified students in their district. MIU IV's Early Intervention Program is also included in this recruitment.

Assignment

MIU IV's Executive Director will be responsible for formally assigning a surrogate parent to a student, at the recommendation of the Surrogate Parent Coordinator. Notice of the assignment, including the student's name and agency responsible for the student will be forwarded to the surrogate parent. MIU IV will also inform the student, where appropriate, of the assignment and the name of the surrogate parent.

Training/Consultation

A program of training and consultation will be implemented to develop and maintain the commitment and competence of all surrogate parent volunteers. The program will cover three major areas: the student assigned, the range of special education programs and services available, and the protections and procedural safeguards/legal implications.

Referral Procedure

The following procedure has been developed for obtaining a surrogate parent:

- ✦ An application for Obtaining a Surrogate Parent must be completed by the student's district of residence or Early Intervention Program and submitted to the Surrogate Parent Coordinator of Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV.
- ✦ The Surrogate Parent Coordinator will assign a trained and qualified Surrogate Parent to the child if available. If no such qualified surrogate is found, the Surrogate Parent Coordinator will work with the district or agency to recruit qualified persons.
- ✦ The Surrogate Parent Coordinator will arrange a training program for qualified surrogate parent volunteers prior to the assignment of the surrogate parent to a specific student.
- ✦ PA State Police, Childline, and FBI Clearances must be obtained before an assignment is made.

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Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV


453 Maple Street
Grove City, PA 16127
www.miu4.org

Contact:

Melissa M. Wyllie, Director of Special Education
Telephone: 724-458-6700 x1206
melissa.wyllie@miu4.org
Fax: 724-458-4468

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Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV

Surrogate Parent Program

Butler, Lawrence & Mercer Counties

The Surrogate Parent Program

The surrogate parent program is a crucial part of the IDEIA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) of 2004 as amended, 300.519 (f). This law requires each state education agency to adopt a state plan to provide adequate due process. One of the law's requirements is that the state needs to protect the rights of a child when a parent or guardian is unknown, unavailable, when the child is a ward of the state, or when the child is an unaccompanied homeless youth. This protection includes the assignment of an individual to act as a surrogate parent. To comply with this Federal law, the PA Department of Education has set forth guidelines for the identification of students who need surrogate parents. Historically, in Pennsylvania, the 29 Intermediate Units (IU's) have been given the responsibility of assisting school districts to identify students in need of a surrogate parent. Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV is involved in recruiting, selecting, training, and assigning surrogate parents for the 27 school districts that we serve as well as for the MIU IV Early Intervention Program.

As a result of the federal law:

- ✚ Pennsylvania has developed a plan to assign a surrogate parent to each handicapped student who is either a ward of the state or whose parent or guardian is unknown or unavailable.
- ✚ Each intermediate unit is now implementing this plan by identifying students needing surrogate parents and then recruiting, selecting and assigning the surrogates.



Qualifications

A surrogate parent must:

- ✚ Be a person of good character.
- ✚ Be at least 18 years old.
- ✚ Possess reasonable abilities to make decisions based on a student's educational needs.
- ✚ Be committed to acquainting themselves with the student's educational needs and with Pennsylvania's educational system.
- ✚ Have no vested interest that would conflict with the interest of the student. (Foster parents may be considered if they meet all other qualifications.)
- ✚ Obtain PA State Police, Childline, and FBI Clearances.

Responsibilities

A surrogate parent will act, in place of a parent, in matters concerning the student's educational program. This will include:

- ✚ Attending a planning conference to develop an IEP (individualized education plan) for the student.
- ✚ Becoming familiar with the appropriate due process and confidentiality of records.
- ✚ Receiving notices concerning evaluation and placement of the student.
- ✚ Receiving in-service training in surrogate responsibilities.

If you would like to become a surrogate parent, or if you would like information about what is happening in your area, please contact:

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Director of Special Education
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Fax: 724-458-4468
melissa.wyllie@miu4.org