OCECD & DRO Partners in Family Advocacy: Reducing Referral Fatigue by Coordinating Support for Ohio Families Navigating Special Education

Disability Rights Ohio (DRO-Ohio's Protection & Advocacy organization) and the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD-Ohio's Parent Information and Training Center) help families navigate the special education process. To better serve Ohio's families, DRO and OCECD will work together to ensure families get referred to the organization best able to assist them so that families quickly get the assistance they need to avoid referral burnout.

Who is DRO

DRO is a statewide non-profit organization that provides advocacy, information, and referrals to people with disabilities. DRO has attorneys and advocates who can help families through the special education process. DRO services are free and there are no income eligibility requirements to get services. DRO provides different levels of services to families depending on the issue and our resources. Services provided can range from information and referrals to attendance at meetings and representation.

Who is OCECD

OCECD is a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the educational interests of children and youth with disabilities birth through age 26. OCECD has information specialists who can help families understand the special education process. OCECD's services are free and there are no income eligibility requirements to get services. OCECD provides consultations, trainings, technical assistance, and IEP support to families.

What organization is best able to assist you (Different roles shared goals)

Depending on your situation and concerns with your school, DRO or OCECD might be in the better position to help you. DRO and OCECD, if they have parental consent, will work together to determine which agency is the best fit to assist you and have a process in place to ensure an efficient transfer or referral from one agency to the other. This process is in place to try to help with the burn-out that parents often feel when they are referred from agency to agency for help.

OCECD and DRO have their own process for determining the level of help they can provide to families. That level of help will be different depending on your specific situation and issues with your school district. The level of help will also be different depending on agency resources that are available.

For DRO, levels of assistance range from providing information and referrals, talking with your school district, attending IEP and other school meetings, help with filing complaints, and representation in due process. OCECD's services range from consultations, technical assistance, and attendance at IEP meetings.

What to expect from the referral process

When a parent or guardian contacts DRO or OCECD, the agencies will work together if a referral to the other organization is appropriate. You will be told by the agency you contacted if a referral will be made. Your consent is necessary for a referral to happen so you will be provided with a document to sign that will give your permission for the agencies to speak to each other to make a referral and discuss your situation. If you do not give your consent, a referral will not occur.



If you give your consent, the referring agency will provide the other agency with the information you have already provided so that you do not have to tell your story again to the other agency. This will help to streamline the process and get you the help you need quickly. With your consent, the agencies will stay in contact with each other about your situation and provide support to each other as necessary to assist with your case. You will be involved in this process so you know what is happening, and always will be able to share any additional information.

The agencies will communicate with you so that you know which agency is taking the lead to help you.

- **Address:** 125 Executive Drive, Suite 200 Marion, OH 43302
- **Phone:** 844-382-5452
- **Email:** ocecd@ocecd.org

- **Address:** 200 Civic Center Drive, Suite 300 Columbus, Ohio 43215
- **Phone:** 614-466-7264 or 800-282-9181
- **Email:** communications@disabilityrightsohio.org

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