

Autism Advocacy Network: A Brief Overview

Mission Statement:

The Autism Advocacy Network is a group of professional individuals who are committed to providing best practice special educational advocacy across the province of Ontario. The main goal is to assist individuals and families to navigate the education system.

Guiding Principles:

Advocacy involves working towards ensuring that each person has provision for the most appropriate support and services for their individual abilities, needs and learning style. Although “All parents have the right to advocate for their child” Shared Solutions, (MOE, 2007pg. 27), all parents are not able to navigate the education system independently. Integrated Autism Consulting and the Autism Advocacy Network can assist in this regard.

Each participant will:

- Focus on positive proactive strategies: (Facilitate improved communication between home and school, provide information about the special education process, assist parents in understanding the acronyms used within the education system: (IPRC, IEP, SNC), inform parents of their rights and responsibilities and those of the education system, share resources that will assist in understanding, provide direct support and/ or suggestions for their individual situation).
- Provide educational workshops and coaching to empower families to advocate on their children’s behalf
- Provide in-school support and consultation, as requested

Advocacy Services:

- Workshops Meeting Attendance
- Consultation Letter Writing
- Coaching IEP and Program Review

Criteria for involvement as an advocate/associate within the AAN

- Since AAN provides services across the spectrum, a wide variety of professionals may be involved. Experienced educators, social workers, lawyers and parents with significant knowledge of the education system may be involved as advocates. Associates will be involved on an indirect basis and will act as consultants to the AAN.
- A detailed resume demonstrating experience in educational advocacy will be available and all participants will agree to the guiding principles of the network.

Website Monitoring and Response

Integrated Autism Consulting will provide a link on the website. Initial responses, forwarding a questionnaire and/or having a telephone conversation to complete the questionnaire will be provided by IAC. Once initial contact has occurred, IAC will contact the person who is within proximity and has the skills for the advocacy issue.