

How to Advocate Successfully for Your Child: What Every Parent Should Know about Special Education Law

Greer M. Gurland

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Gurland's guide provides everything that the parents of special needs children need to get started on advocating for their children.

How to Advocate Successfully for Your Child: What Every Parent Should Know about Special Education Law by Greer M. Gurland is an indispensable introductory guide for parents to voicing their children's needs.

Raising and advocating for a child with special needs can be stressful and overwhelming. Still, parents are the people best equipped to know what a child needs and to pursue those necessities passionately and persistently.

Gurland has a two-edged expertise to offer parents in that position: the author is a lawyer and is herself the mother of children with special needs. She blended her expertise into advocacy work for children with special needs. This book focuses on the exact, practical information that parents need to do the same. Its approach is encouraging and enthusiastic.

The book provides insight into building relationships with the school system, learning what options are available, and persevering through the process. The book's appendix further equips parents to put what they've learned into practice, even saving them work by providing sample forms and letters—another way in which Gurland demonstrates that she knows the stresses and needs of her audience.

The book is slim, with bite-sized chapters and plenty of space for notes. As a result, it functions as a primer to get parents started, a launching point from which they can learn as they go. Gurland doesn't address every possible issue and scenario; instead, she offers problem-solving ideas related to common situations. This is work that will help parents adapt to their own children's complex needs.

The book is detailed and organized but also has a conversational voice, which is reassuring, though somewhat overdone in the introduction. Gurland's voice has an urgency that every parent of a child with special needs can relate to, and her optimism will be inspiring for those who are feeling bogged down. The biggest gift Gurland gives parents is confidence. The book gives the assurance that by following her lead parents really will be able to get what's best for their children—even in frustrating moments when that goal feels hopeless and out of reach. And while the book owns up to the difficulties of working within often-cumbersome school systems, Gurland eschews negativity and empowers parents to pursue positive partnerships.

This book stands to be most helpful for overwhelmed but dedicated parents just beginning the journey to securing their child's educational needs, but it also speaks helpfully to more experienced parents, or to those helping children transition to new levels of education or educational environments.

The cover design belies the value of the content. It contains too much information and is busy with images. An interior

layout with much white space and bold scripts proves distracting—though occasionally the bold is useful for calling out key takeaways for parents.

How to Advocate Successfully for Your Child provides everything that parents of special needs children need to get started on advocating for their children and to help them learn as they go.

MELISSA WUSKE (January 12, 2017)

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