

Surrogate Parent Program Procedures Mount Union Area School District

I. Identification of persons needing surrogate parents

Those needing surrogate parents must be eligible persons receiving or entitled to a free appropriate public education program in a public school, or assigned to an approved private school and who are wards of the state, or whose parent (s) or guardian are unknown or unavailable.

II. Plan for the identification of students in need of surrogate parents

Tuscarora IU 11 will coordinate the surrogate parent program on behalf of member school districts when requested. Tuscarora IU 11 will:

A. Appoint a surrogate parent coordinator. The Director of Special Education Programs and Services or his/her designee will function as this coordinator.

B. Contact school districts, Mental Health/Mental Retardation (MH/MR systems, Children & Youth Services (C&YS), Juvenile court, preschool agencies, and other social and family services agencies to identify children in need of surrogate parents.

C. Provide literature and media information for caseworkers, and foster parents outlining the surrogate parent requirements and eligibility. This information specifies that the child's caseworker is ineligible to act as a surrogate parent and that foster parents are often the first choice for surrogate parents when no conflict exists.

III. Tuscarora IU 11 must insure identification and referral of children eligible for a surrogate parent. In this regard, Tuscarora IU 11 will:

A. Request that superintendents identify surrogate parent eligible children and refer them to IU11.

B. Request that districts refer surrogate parent eligible students to the IU for surrogate parent assignment.

C. Provide literature and training for district personnel outlining the surrogate parent requirements, eligibility and referral process.

D. Maintain a system for monitoring parent/guardian participation in the IEP process to determine if the parent is known and available. Appointment of a surrogate parent would be required if parents are unavailable.

IV. Recruitment of qualified surrogate parents. Tuscarora IU 11 will:

A. Recruit surrogate parents widely and actively from a variety of sources on an on-going basis.

B. Maintain a list of persons available to serve as surrogate parents.

C. Reimburse surrogate parents for travel costs even though surrogate parents are considered to be volunteers.

V. Selection and Assignment of qualified surrogate parents.

- A. Criteria for selection of qualified surrogates:
1. The IU shall insure that a person selected as a surrogate has no interest that conflicts with the interest of a child he or she represents. The surrogate parent should not be an employee of a public agency, which is involved in the education or care of the child.
 2. The IU shall insure that a person selected as a surrogate has knowledge and skills that insure adequate representation of the child.
 3. The IU requires that the surrogate parent demonstrate that he or she:
 - a. is a person of good character
 - b. is at least 18 years of age
 - c. possesses reasonable abilities to make decisions concerning a child's educational needs
 - d. is committed to acquainting themselves with a student's educational needs and the Commonwealth's special education system, and
 - e. is able and available to attend conferences to discuss the child's educational program.

B. Assignment of qualified surrogate parents

1. Responsibility to assign surrogate parents

On behalf of member school districts, IU 11 will determine each surrogate parent assignment. The IU Executive Director will be responsible for formally assigning a surrogate to a student.

2. Consideration will be given to:

- a. Cultural, ethnic, and language compatibility
- b. Duration of time available to serve
- c. Preference for child with particular handicap and/or age
- d. Distance between location of person and surrogate parent

VI. Training of surrogate parents

The surrogate parent training programs should include the following information:

A. The Law and Implications/Responsibilities and Rights

- a. Federal law and Regulations
- b. PA State Laws, Regulations and Standards
- c. Complaint procedures
- d. Due Process
- e. Monitoring

B. The Special Education Process

- a. Identification
- b. Evaluation
- c. IEP
- d. Related Services
- e. Due Process
- f. Least Restrictive Environment
- g. Confidentiality

C. Role of the Surrogate Parent

- a. Act in place of parents
- b. Attend meetings

- c. Represent and make decisions for the child
 - d. Participate in IEP development
 - e. Liability
- D. Resources Available to the Surrogate Parent
- a. Legal assistance
 - b. Advocacy Agencies
 - c. Local Task Force
 - d. Other

For more information contact:

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