

Educational Advocate Surrogate Parent Program



Paul V. Sherlock Center

On Disabilities / Rhode Island College

Commission on Outcomes for
Children in State Care.
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Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities

Rhode Island College

The Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities is a federally designated **University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)**, administered and monitored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Community Living.

Supports one or more areas of emphasis for each core function:

- Research & Evaluation
- Dissemination of Information
- Interdisciplinary Training
- Community Service

Core functions and services are based on “the unmet needs of individuals with disabilities and their families.”

Initiatives cross the lifespan, from birth thru natural life



The mission of the Sherlock Center is to promote membership for all in school, work and the community.

Services Across the Lifespan

Birth - Early Childhood

Early Intervention
Training & TA
Project

International
ECSE Inclusion
Work

Brookes Early
Childhood
Inclusion

Family Support

School Age

Vision Education
Services Program

Educational
Surrogate Parent
Program

Dual Sensory
Impairment
Project

Robo Kind Project

Transition to Adult Life

School Based
Transition
Services

Educational
Surrogate Parent
Program

Employment
Initiatives

Individual and
Family Support

Adult Services

CFCM Training

Benefits
Counseling

Technology
Research

Individual and
Family Support



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Educational Surrogate Parent Program

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 300.519
 - Ensures the appointment of a surrogate parent for children with disabilities, or suspected of having a disability, in the care and custody of the state.
- RI Consent Decree in 1983
 - Formalized Rhode Island's Educational Surrogate Parent Program
- Joined the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities in 2003



Purpose of the Educational Surrogate Parent Program

- Protect child's educational rights
- Ensure children with disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Collaborate with state and local partners to ensure the child's best interests are taken into consideration for educational programming



When is an Educational Surrogate Parent Needed?

When a child in DCYF care and custody has an identified disability or is suspected of having a disability and...

- The child's parent cannot be identified or located
- Youth without a parent or guardian who is experiencing homelessness
- A court terminates parents' legal rights
- A student requests a surrogate



Who Can Be An Educational Surrogate Parent in RI?

Professionals

- Individuals hired by the Sherlock Center
- Comprehensively trained to be Surrogate Parents

Foster Parents

- Foster parents can act as an Educational Surrogate Parent
- Foster parents are appointed by RIDE and then trained by the Sherlock Center Program

Parents

- Parents (bio, adoptive, guardian) are assigned when a child returns home, and the case remains open to DCYF

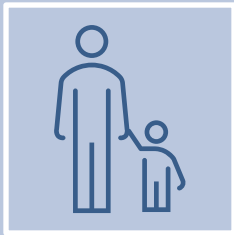


Accessing Educational Surrogate Parent Services

- A student in DCYF care who has a documented disability or is suspected of having a disability **and** whose parent(s) is unavailable.
- A judge makes a court order to appoint an Educational Surrogate Parent or a DCYF Caseworker makes a referral to Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE).
- The court order/referral is sent to RIDE.
- RIDE sends the referral to the Sherlock Center's Educational Surrogate Parent Program.



Considerations Regarding Educational Surrogate Parent Program



When duly appointed, an Educational Surrogate Parent replaces parents in the education decision making process for their child. *(Not assigned to assist)*



A parent's educational decision-making rights are, in essence, suspended, when an Educational Surrogate Parent is assigned.



The Educational Surrogate works collaboratively with parents, but when there is a difference of opinion, the Educational Surrogate Parent's decisions prevails



Internal Review Committee (IRC)

IRC required by the Consent Decree

Meets quarterly to review progress,
analyze problems and propose
solutions

Monitors flow of referrals

Review number of children receiving
services



Educational Surrogate Parent Program Collaborations

Staff collaborate with

- School districts
- Office of the Child Advocate (OCA)
- Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
- Mental health facilities
- Out of state residential placements providers

Collaborations help ensure the best interests of the child are taken into consideration for educational programming.



Educational Surrogate Parent Responsibilities

- Act as a parent in all educational matters, a member of the IEP team that makes educational decisions
- Obtain and review all educational records
- Maintain communication with DCYF social workers and caregivers
- Troubleshoot enrollment, placement and transportation issues
- Visit and observe school settings
- Sign consent for all school related evaluations
- Agree or disagree with proposed educational placements



Educational Surrogate Parent Responsibilities

- Contact RIDE's Call Center when there are disputes with school districts
- Initiate due process when appropriate
- Attend conferences and workshops related to special education and related fields
- Provide training to foster parents and supporting agencies
- Attend school meetings related to assigned students including evaluation team meetings, IEP meetings, discipline meetings, school conferences, transition meetings
- Attend community-based meetings regarding students' well being



Educational Surrogate Parent Services in FY25

- Served 631 students, who are in state care
 - 22% Elementary School
 - 11% Middle School
 - 60% High school
 - 7% In Transition Programming
- Participated in 1,300 meetings (school conferences, ESSA, court appearances, classroom/program observations, DCYF and provider meetings)
- Collaborated with 38 school districts, as well as charter schools and other community partners



Educational Surrogate Parent Services

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
# of Students in DCYF Care	3632	3531	3428	3334	3284
Surrogate Parent/Educational Advocate Program					
Active Students Served per Year	717	745	688	746	724
New referrals	197	142	242	321	220
Services Provided by Surrogate Parent/Educational Advocate	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
IEP Meetings	495	485	480	470	489
School conferences	569	409	456	538	569
Evaluation meetings	241	198	185	204	241
Manifestation meetings	29	4	27	23	29
Foster parent trainings/Individual					
FP Yearly Update sent to Ed. Advocate FP	32	41	42	42	28



Educational Surrogate Parent Program

Graduation Rates

Surrogate Parent/Educational Advocate Active Student Cases	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Eligible for graduation	16	17	32	34	35
Met graduation requirement	4	4	18	19	20
When on to transition services	12	13	13	15	15
Did not graduate			1		
	100%	100%	97%	100%	100%



Sharing Our Work

*Name changed for confidentiality



Questions?

Thank you!

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