

Interviewing Schools *when your child has a brain injury*

Too often I hear a parent say, "But I'm just a Mom..." Yet Moms and Dads are the most important people in a child's life. They are also critical resources for information when a student has a brain injury. Although involvement of parents is required under the law for students receiving special education, too often involvement is limited to infrequent meetings that focus more on the paperwork of special education than a mutual discussion of the child's needs and strategies.

It's not always easy for parents and educators to communicate. Schedules of working parents and teachers often don't match easily. When teachers meet after a full day of classes

and parents take time off from work or arrange for childcare for other children, time to sit down together may be limited.

Yet it is the communication between educators and parents that can be so beneficial in understanding how this child is doing at home and in school. Both parties have valuable information and perspectives to exchange. But communication is often stymied if educators or parents are unsure of where to begin or what to ask. Below is a checklist to help parents initially open up channels for communication. Think about how you can use these as a starting point and how to modify them for your situation.

Because many educators are unfamiliar with the consequences

Checklist for interviewing specialists or consultants

- Do you have experience with children or adolescents with brain injury?
- Do you only see youths in medical or rehabilitation settings?
- Do you primarily see youths within the first year of their injury?
- Have you worked with youths more than one year after their injury?
- Do you have experience working with school systems?
- Do you prefer to see the student...

- in your office
- at school
- in the classroom
- at home

Are you available to talk with...

- parents
- educators
- therapists
- team members
- peers/classmates

Can you provide...

- in-services for school staff
- education for peers/classmates
- observation of student in classroom
- meetings/discussion with educational team
- input at IEP meetings
- other _____



Do you provide...

- testing
- functional evaluations
- on-site observation
- consultation for problem-solving
- written reports
- other _____

What kind of follow-up can you give...

- written reports
- telephone consultation
- school based meetings
- office meetings
- other _____

What is your time frame...

- available immediately
- waiting list (how long) _____



Interviewing Schools *continued*

of brain injuries for learning, finding local experts can save a lot of trial and error. Finding the right specialist is largely a matter of asking the right questions. Children and adolescents are very different than adults. While there may be many professionals experienced with adults with brain injuries, their knowledge and skills may not necessarily be what you are looking for to work with students. Making the right match can avoid a lot of frustration, disappointment and expense. ❖

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