

## What should I do if I want to be a surrogate parent, or if I have additional questions?

For information about becoming or remaining a surrogate parent, contact the principal at your child's school, the special education director at your local school district, or your education service center.

Surrogate Parent Training may also be completed through an online module: [www.TexasParent.org/projects](http://www.TexasParent.org/projects).

Useful information about special education in general can be found on these websites:

**Texas Project FIRST**

[www.TexasProjectFIRST.org](http://www.TexasProjectFIRST.org)

**SpedTex**

[www.spedtex.org](http://www.spedtex.org)

**Texas Education Agency**

[www.tea.texas.gov](http://www.tea.texas.gov)



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# What is a Surrogate Parent?



## Parent Coordination Network

A Leadership Function of the  
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## What is a surrogate parent?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 2004 requires that state and local school systems involve parents in decisions regarding their child's needs. In cases where the child has no parents, none can be located, or the child is a ward of the state, a parent surrogate must be appointed to represent the child and protect the child's rights in matters relating to identification, evaluation, and placement in a special education program. A surrogate parent must also complete required training regarding special education laws, rules, procedures, and due process rights pertaining to a child with a disability and be willing to put in the time to adequately represent the best interests of the child.

## Who is not eligible to be a surrogate parent?

Anyone who is an employee of the state, school district or any other agency involved in the education or care of the child, and anyone with any interest that conflicts with the interests of the child cannot serve as a surrogate parent.



## What are the responsibilities of a surrogate parent?

In Texas, surrogate parents are required to:

- Be willing to serve in that capacity;
- Exercise independent judgment in pursuing the child's interests;
- Ensure that the child's due process rights are not violated;
- Complete a training program that complies with minimum standards established by TEA;
- Visit the child and the child's school regularly;
- Review the child's educational records;
- Consult with persons involved in the child's education; and
- Attend Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee meetings.

Additional activities for a surrogate parent include:

- Learning the child's background and educational history;
- Knowing the child's interests, strengths, and weaknesses;
- Observing the child at school and in other environments;
- Meeting with the child's teachers, principal, and other professionals working with the child;
- Keeping a record of all activities in accordance with the school's requirements for surrogate parents;
- Reviewing school records, particularly the current evaluation, placement, and services;

- Asking questions concerning anything you do not understand;
- Maintaining confidentiality to protect the child's privacy; and
- Being familiar with all aspects of the child to become an informed, effective advocate.

## What does a surrogate parent need to know?

- Identification of a child with a disability;
- Collection of evaluation and re-evaluation data relating to a child with a disability;
- ARD committee process;
- Development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP), including the consideration of transition services for a child who is at least 14 years of age;
- Determination of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE);
- Implementation of an IEP;
- Procedural Safeguards;
- Where to obtain assistance in understanding the laws, rules, and regulations relating to children with disabilities; and
- Duties and responsibilities of a surrogate parent.