

SPARC

Special Education Partnership for the Amicable Resolution of Conflict



SPARC is a statewide, special education dispute resolution program that supports families and schools in working collaboratively to resolve differences regarding the education of a student with an educational disability. SPARC services are ideal for managing disputes involving any matter under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), such as a student's eligibility, educational classification, special education and related services, and placement.

SPARC services are *voluntary, confidential, and free of charge*. Utilization of SPARC services will not delay or deny any rights afforded under the IDEA.

Mediation

Mediation is a structured process in which an impartial third party helps families and schools resolve differences regarding the education of a student with a disability. SPARC mediation encourages dialogue, problem solving, positive relationships, and mutual trust. Participants are able to share their concerns in a confidential and supportive environment.

Through constructive dialogue and joint problem solving, participants gain a more holistic view of the problem *and* the solution that will best meet the needs of the student.

The participants, not the mediator, determine the outcome of mediation. If an agreement is reached, the terms are documented and are legally binding. If an agreement is not reached, the parties are free to pursue other avenues of dispute resolution.

IEP Meeting Facilitation

IEP meeting facilitation is quickly becoming the most recognized strategy for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of IEP meetings. Facilitated IEP meetings allow team members to focus on the student's education in a collaborative and respectful manner.

Prior to the IEP meeting, SPARC facilitators work with the family and the school to create a comprehensive meeting agenda. During the IEP team meeting, the facilitator guides the team through a process of open dialogue and understanding aimed at building trust among all team members. Through balanced participation and shared decision-making, teams are better able to make decisions that are in the best interest of the student.

The facilitator is not a member of the IEP team or an advocate for any person on the team. The facilitator's responsibility is to the whole team.

For more information, contact the Conflict Resolution Program at 302-831-8158 or sparc-info@udel.edu. Learn more about SPARC at www.bidenschool.udel.edu/ipa/serving-delaware/crp/sparc.

This program is part of the **Special Education Partnership for the Amicable Resolution of Conflict (SPARC)**, which is sponsored by the **Conflict Resolution Program** within the **Institute for Public Administration** at the **University of Delaware** in cooperation with the **Delaware Department of Education**.



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About SPARC staff

SPARC services are administered through the University of Delaware's Conflict Resolution Program (CRP). The Program's experienced mediators and facilitators specialize in special education dispute resolution. SPARC staff adhere to the highest standards of ethics, professional competence, and personal integrity. They are committed to providing confidential and impartial dispute resolution services to families and school staff who want to work together to resolve differences.

SPARC mediators and facilitators create an environment that promotes constructive dialogue and collaborative decision making. They assist parties in communicating effectively, problem solving, and exploring mutually satisfying solutions.

Consider SPARC when...

- You have done your best to resolve disagreements, but cannot reach a resolution.
- You want to resolve differences swiftly, economically, and in the best interest of the student.
- You need confidential and impartial assistance to reach consensus.

Since 1996, SPARC has served Delaware school districts, charter schools, and more than 1,000 families.

Participants say...

"Mediator does a great job making sure everyone is heard, everything is understood, and makes people feel at ease during meetings." – Parent

"The mediator was quite supportive and demonstrated a level of understanding of the complex issues presented in the case. The mediation process appears to have us on a good track." – District

"The facilitator made sure everyone was actually in agreement and kept the meeting calm and professional." – Parent

"[Facilitator's] contribution was extremely valuable. She helped all parties feel validated and she ensured that we addressed all the concerns raised by parents and school staff." – District

"The mediator was supportive and impartial. She ensured that all parties had space and time to express themselves in a respectful way. She helped to guide the conversation to ensure that all concerns were discussed, which ultimately allowed our parties to come to an agreement and empathize with each other. We would absolutely recommend the service and if ever necessary, we would not hesitate to use it again in the future." – Charter School

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