



## What are my signing rights and responsibilities as a foster parent?

As a foster parent, you are responsible for advocating for the educational needs of your child. You are considered the “**education-decision maker**” (EDM). It is important that you are aware of your rights and responsibilities as your child’s EDM. If your child receives special education services, the EDM is also known as the “**special-education decision maker.**”

Please note: There are a few cases where foster parents are NOT the EDM. This includes if a child is placed in a CRA custody, or if your child was assigned a special education surrogate parent (SESP) or an education guardian ad litem (Ed-GAL) by the court. If you are not sure if your child has a SESP or Ed-GAL, check in with your child’s DCF social worker.

### *Special education*

With only your signature and consent,

- School can initiate a special education evaluation
- School can provide special education services. If your child is eligible for an IEP, a written report will be shared with you for review. You can accept the proposal fully or partially by signing the IEP document, or you can reject it completely.
- DCF does not have the above signing rights. It can suggest a special education evaluation, but only with your signature can a school start testing!

### *Other responsibilities*

- If your child receives special education services, you will need to attend the IEP/504 team meetings. These meetings are typically held annually but you can request for an earlier meeting if needed.
- Advocate for your child’s educational needs by:
  - Accessing and reviewing previous education records. These can be obtained by contacting the school your child is currently enrolled in. If they do not have such records, contact your child’s DCF social worker.
  - Communicating with your child’s teachers, and expressing any concerns
  - Accessing report cards and progress reports, and talking with your child about his/her academic progress
  - Ensure that your child is enrolled and attending school regularly. If you need to enroll your child in school, reach out to your child’s DCF social worker.
  - Ensure that your child is completing his/her homework
  - Give permission for your child to attend school based activities like field trips



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When caring for kids in the foster care system, information between parties may not be well communicated. If you are the EDM of your child, make sure that your child's school is aware of your role. The school should be communicating with you. For example, the school should be contacting you to schedule IEP/504 team meetings, mailing you report cards or progress reports, and emailing you with updates or changes to the classroom or curriculum.

Information was gathered from the resources below. If you want to learn more, check out the following:

DESE: When is it appropriate for a SESP to be appointed

- <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/2013SurrogateParent.html>