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## **Interventions between the family and the Warwick School Department staff to resolve disagreements:**

In an effort to develop and maintain collaborative relations with families and schools, it is suggested that families first communicate with the school personnel closest to the issue of concern.

In some instances, this could be a child's teacher, other direct service provider, or an administrator. If the issue is not resolved by working with the staff closest to the issue, then it is recommended that the family contact the staff person's supervisor. Typically at the elementary level this is the building principal. At the secondary level, it would be the special education department head and then the building principal.

Each Warwick school is supported by an assistant special education director. This person may be contacted if the issue can not be resolved at the building level.

Contact the Special Education office at 734-3055 to be connected with your school's Assistant Special Education Director.

The Director of Special Services can also serve as a resource in this process. The Director's office can be contacted at 734-3051.

Families may contact school staff directly or may request that staff from an information and support organization help them. In order for an agency to discuss a specific student with the school staff, it is imperative that the school receive a release of information from the family before contact is made to discuss a specific student.

Warwick also has a Special Education Advisory ([www.wseac.org](http://www.wseac.org)) committee which has parent members that are willing to speak with other parents, answer questions, and provide information and support. Families should call the Special Services office at 734-3051 to get into contact with one of the members.

### **Resource Phone Numbers for Families**

J. Arthur Trudeau Center/Kent County ARC  
3445 Post Road, Warwick, RI 02886  
(401)739-2700  
Family Support Coordinator

Parent Support Network (PSN)  
1395 Atwood Avenue, Johnston, RI 02919  
(401)467-6855

RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN)  
1210 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston, RI 02920  
(401)270-0101

Sherlock Center on Disabilities @ RIC  
600 Mount Pleasant Avenue  
Providence, RI 02908  
(401)456-8072

Warwick Special Services  
34 Warwick Lake Avenue  
Warwick, RI 02889  
(401)734-3055

RI Department of Education 'Hotline'  
(questions, complaints, etc.)  
(401)222-8999

The following information was adapted from “Options Available When Disagreement Occurs Regarding The Special Education Of Children With Disabilities”, developed by the Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP).

When local actions don’t resolve areas of disagreement between families and schools, either a parent or a school district can request a dispute resolution option at any time and in any order they choose. Identifying the issue(s) and knowing the desired outcome will usually determine which option is best to pursue.

**Dispute Resolution Options:**

**Mediation:** Mediation often resolves disagreements between parents and school departments in a cooperative manner. To go through the mediation process, both the parent and the school department must agree to mediation, allowing a neutral third party (the mediator) to help them reach agreement. The role of the mediator is to listen to both sides and to encourage the sharing of information in a respectful manner. Mediators are trained persons who are appointed by RIDE (Rhode Island Department of Education) and whose services are available free of charge to both parties.

**Impartial Due Process Hearing:** An impartial due process hearing in special education is a structured administrative procedure presided over by a trained hearing officer appointed by RIDE. The hearing officer’s role is to schedule hearing dates, rule on the introduction of evidence and motions by the parties, and oversee the testimony of witnesses and the creation of a record of the proceeding. The parent and the school department have the right to be represented by legal counsel. At the conclusion of the hearing, the hearing officer enters a written decision, issues orders, or approves a settlement agreement entered into by the parent and the school district.

**Administrative Complaint:** If a parent, individual or organization believes a school department has violated a federal or state special education law or regulation, they may file an administrative complaint with the Rhode Island Department of Education.

Complaints must be written, signed and filed with the Office of Special Populations. Complaint forms and instructions are available on the RIDE website: [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov). For more detailed information regarding your rights, please refer to the “Procedural Safeguards for Special Education”. Copies of this document are available from your school department.

To request mediation, due process hearing or file an administrative complaint, please contact RIDE, Office of Diverse Learners, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903-3400 at (401) 222-3505.

# Warwick Resources and Options

For families to resolve special education issues with the Warwick School Department

