

## Introduction

---

School services and supports for students with disabilities is a reality today because of the commitment of parents, associations, and professionals to educational opportunity for students with disabilities. Education for students with disabilities is now required by law, but only with informed and vigilant advocacy will students with disabilities continue to be assured an education that meets their unique needs.

Students with Disabilities: An Advocate's Guide was written as a reference manual for everyone from parents entering the special education process for the first time to attorneys. It is a synthesis of federal and state special education statutes and regulations, combined with advocacy techniques and approaches.

The manual is divided into sections to help you work through the special education process logically. You will notice that it first covers essential background information -- such as definitions, contacts, and relevant laws -- and then moves to the actual process.

The text is meant to be a non-legal explanation of special education law. Actual statutes and regulations, however, are crucial to effective advocacy because the ability to point to the relevant legal language will be more persuasive than referring to a restatement of the law. The manual provides full legal citations so you can look up the laws or regulations yourself. Just take the manual to your local bar association library or other law library and ask the librarian for assistance in looking up the law or regulation you need.

This manual is not intended to answer all your questions about special education. Many questions can only be addressed individually. DRM provides other written information, advocacy services and referrals to assist with individual questions.

The information contained in this manual is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Neither the information contained in the manual nor its use by a visitor creates a contract or an attorney-client relationship. Although we strive to be as accurate as possible, there is no promise or warranty as to the accuracy, completeness, adequacy, timeliness, or relevance of the information contained in the materials. If these materials contain links to websites or other resources, DRM is not responsible for the content of those websites or resources.

## Acknowledgments

Students with Disabilities: An Advocate's Guide was written by Laura Petrovello and Nancy Sullivan in 1984. DRM expresses appreciation to Charles Mange, Ph.D., Lynwood E. Beekman, Esq., Harrold Spicknall, Ph.D., Sandra McClennen, Ph.D., Lutie Papesch, M.A., and Caroline Campbell, M.A., for reviewing and commenting on the initial version. The manual was revised in 1987, 1989, 1993, 2000, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2017, and 2020.