



## ***Navigating Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)***

"PASSAGES" IS A PUBLICATION OF  
PIKE AUTISM SUPPORT SERVICES

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#### **OUR MISSION**

PIKE AUTISM SUPPORT SERVICES (PASS) IS A 501(C)(3) NONPROFIT WITH A MISSION TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM AND RELATED INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (IDD) WITH SOCIAL, RECREATIONAL, EDUCATIONAL, HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

#### **OUR VISION**

WE ENVISION A DAY WHEN INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM AND IDD ENJOY FULFILLING AND INDEPENDENT LIVES, EMBRACING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING, INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, SOCIAL INCLUSION, PERSONAL GROWTH, SELF-DETERMINATION, AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS.

### ***Opening Doors***



***to Independence***



Navigating Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) can be both complex and crucial for the success of students with special needs. An IEP serves as a personalized roadmap, outlining specific educational goals, accommodations, and services tailored to meet the unique requirements of each student.



Whether you're a parent, educator, or advocate, understanding how to effectively navigate and optimize an IEP is essential in ensuring that every child receives the support they need to thrive academically and beyond. Here are some tips for navigating the IEP process.

To ensure efficient IEP meetings, organize a binder that contains all previous IEP documents, evaluations, and relevant information. This binder serves as a valuable tool for tracking your child's progress over time and facilitating a smoother meeting flow. Additionally, it provides an ideal space to maintain a checklist of topics you wish to discuss during the meeting. Consider including a list of significant changes in the child's life, such as adjustments in medication, behavioral patterns, speech development, interests and preferences, family dynamics, and other pertinent information. This comprehensive binder enhances your ability to effectively participate in IEP meetings and advocate for your child's educational needs.

A written notice will encompass a list of participants. Review the list to ensure the presence of all essential school staff and external personnel. Inviting a companion or an advocate can provide moral support and assist in documenting the discussion effectively, be sure to notify the school of who you will be bringing.

Prior to the meeting, distribute a Parental Concern letter to the participants. This will provide an opportunity to address any questions or concerns in advance, ensuring that the meeting time with the team can be used effectively to develop a plan.

Understanding your legal and parental rights is crucial in navigating the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. Pennsylvania's special education regulations for school districts are outlined in Chapter 14 of the 22 PA Code, while Chapter 711 covers charter schools. Several organizations offer webinars to educate parents about the IEP process, including The ARC of NEPA, The PEAL Center, and PATTAN. of each month.

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Connect with other parents who have been walking this path to learn from their experiences. Over the past few years, I've gained valuable information and advice from Jeannemarie, which has helped me become a more effective advocate for my son. Connecting with support groups can also be beneficial. PASS, for example, hosts a support group on the fourth Wednesday of each month.

In conclusion, navigating the IEP process effectively requires a combination of organization, advocacy, and collaboration. By utilizing a comprehensive binder, ensuring the presence of essential participants, distributing a Parental Concern letter, understanding your legal rights, and connecting with other parents and support groups, you can optimize your child's IEP and ensure that they receive the educational support they need to thrive. Remember, the IEP is a document that should be regularly reviewed and revised to ensure it continues to meet your child's evolving needs

**Mary Beth Marra**  
Director, Pike Autism Support Services

## Programs, Events and News

- **ASD Adult Support Group – Thursday July 25th 2024**
  - Support Group for Adults on the Spectrum 7pm here at the Milford Community House. Each month, we will have an open discussion time and a themed discussion. In this first session, we will see what topics you want to gather resources on for the future. All topics can be discussed. Ideas include job skills, medical rights, self-esteem, self-advocacy, and dating. These are open conversations in the group. The group led by a LBS who can provide suggestions to help you meet your goals
- **Bowling club**
  - Stay Cool on Hot Summer Friday afternoons – Bowling club meets at Memory Lanes Port Jervis at 5pm on Fridays.
- **Coming up - "Paint with Megan"** – look for an email & posting with details & start date
- **Run/Walk for PASS at Back Road Brewing Co.**
  - Mark your Calendars! Sunday, October 6th, 2024: Run/Walk for PASS at Back Road Brewing Co.
- **Enrichment Center and Housing for Independence Village**
  - We are still looking for land for our Enrichment Center and Housing for Independence Village in the Milford/Westfall Area – please reach out if you know of anyone who would like to be part of making this dream a reality!

Until next Month.... Stay Safe & Enjoy your summer!

*Jeannemarie Passaro*  
Executive Director