



STEP AHEAD NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2020

From the Executive Director

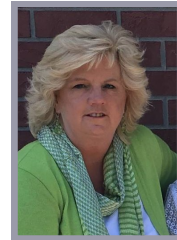
Hello STEP Friends!

Have you been as busy as us? Well, being people who have a personal connection to disability or who work in the special education field—like all of us here—we’re pretty certain that you have.

We’d love to hear what’s keeping your lives action-packed, but, until you tell us, we’ll let you know what we’ve been up to: training high school youth with disabilities—LOTS of them!; attending education conferences and meetings—to keep you and us apprised of what’s new; developing webinars and in-person trainings on a variety of important topics; and on-boarding new staff to enhance our capacity to “deliver the goods”!

Our latest STEP AHEAD NEWSLETTER highlights training opportunities, current information, and getting to great outcomes for your child. Stay in touch, and please send us your feedback!

Karen Harrison
Executive Director, STEP, Inc.



News You Can Use: The Power of Prior Written Notice (PWN)

Just about every day STEP receives a call from a parent asking questions like, “Can the school say no to my request for an evaluation?”, or “What do I do next? The school is suggesting changing my child’s placement.” The division of special education issued guidance to clarify the use of prior written notice, a powerful tool to use when these types of questions arise. The June 8, 2017 memo from Assistant Commissioner for Special Populations, Theresa Nicholls, addresses these four instances that require prior written notice: **IEP Team Proposal; IEP Team Refusal; Initial Evaluation; and Re-evaluation.**

The memo states: *The term “prior written notice” refers to **written** notice that is required after a change has been proposed or refused but before (i.e., prior to) implementing that change.* In other words, as a parent, you must be given, in writing, specific information by your child’s school system that will help you understand what is being proposed or refused and why. This is a vital component you can use to determine what steps to take next.

You can read the full memo at http://bit.ly/TDOE_PWN_Memo. Our team is available to answer any questions and to assist you on your journey as an active, knowledgeable part of the team, making educational decisions for your child.

Most Requested STEP Training Workshops

SPECIAL EDUCATION BASIC RIGHTS (In English and Spanish)

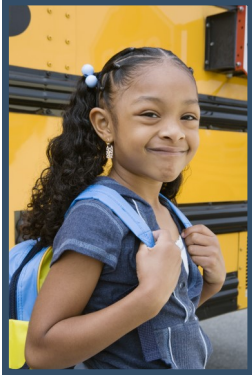
This workshop is designed for parents of children in special education or who might need special ed services. Come and gain a working knowledge of special education laws, including your vital role in the development of an appropriate Individualized Education Program (IEP) and how to be a more effective partner with the school team.

INCLUSION AND LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

If you have a child with a disability and would like to know more about your child's right to be educated with students who do not have disabilities, or if you have questions on how to make inclusion work, this session is for you.

TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

This workshop is designed for individuals with disabilities and their families who are in the process of getting ready for transition, and for professionals involved in the transition planning process.



STEP Staff can also provide informative and interactive trainings on the following topics:

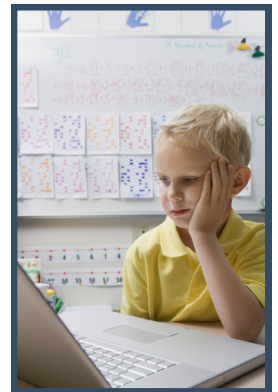
- **IEP PLANNING AND INSTRUCTIONALLY APPROPRIATE IEP WORKSHOP** (In English and Spanish)
- **COMMUNICATION, NEGOTIATION, & CONFLICT RESOLUTION**
- **EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT**
- **TRANSITION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD**
- **504 WORKSHOP**
- **RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION AND INSTRUCTION (RTI2)**
- **LITERACY FOR ALL**
- **PARENTS AS LEADERS**

TRAININGS ON DEMAND!

Additionally, STEP is pleased to offer a series of virtual Special Education videos to parents and professionals. Our FREE "on demand" workshop videos can be viewed on your computer, tablet or smartphone and accessed anywhere you have a high-speed internet connection. These informative virtual workshops are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Each video series includes handouts that are down-loadable, and when you finish a video series you can also access a "Certificate of Completion." The current offerings are:

- **Basic Rights: Training on IDEA - A Parent's Introduction**
- **Instructionally Appropriate IEPs**
- **Planning for Success after High School**

To access these trainings, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TNStep/playlists>



TO SCHEDULE AN IN-PERSON TRAINING WORKSHOP:

West TN: (901) 726-4334 westrtc@tnstep.org

Middle TN: (615) 463-2310 middlertc@tnstep.org

East TN: (423) 639-0125, ext. 17 eastrtc@tnstep.org

Espanol: (800) 975-2919 patricia.valladares@tnstep.org

For a statewide calendar of other trainings and workshops that may be of interest, visit www.tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu.

UPCOMING STEP ONE-PAGER INFO SHEETS AND WEBINARS

STEP is known for its informative “one-pagers” that parents, teachers, students, and other education stakeholders grab up at our exhibits at workshops and conferences. In 2020, we will be adding the following one-pagers to our extensive resource archive:

- **Supported Decision Making and Least Restrictive Environment across the Lifespan**
- **Tips for Successfully Supporting the Behavioral Needs of Students, and Accessing Functional Behavioral Assessments and Positive Behavior Support Plans**
- **Frequently Asked Questions About Eligibility**

STEP also offers Information Packets on the following topics:

- **ADHD**
- **Assistive Technology**
- **Autism**
- **Conservatorship, Special Need Trusts, and Wills**
- **TennCare and the Waiver System**
- **Literacy**
- **Modifications and Accommodations**
- **Vocational Rehabilitation**



To find out what other resources are available for downloading or ordering, visit our website or call the STEP office.

STEP is proud to announce a new webinar training series: **Families and Schools Together (FAST): Increasing Student Success through Partnership**. Each webinar has tools you can download and put to use right away!

Identifying Each Student's Strengths and Needs (in our archives)

Effectively communicating your child’s areas of strength and their unique needs sets the stage for children with disabilities to be successful in school. STEP will provide tools families can use to provide important information about their child to teachers. These tools can also be used by teachers to gather this information from families.

Hearing the Families' Voice - Parent Concerns as a Priority (in our archives)

Understanding the concerns of families related to their child’s education is an important part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. This webinar will focus on how families can effectively share their concerns, along with strategies for IEP teams to respond to parent concerns.

Supporting Students in Their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

12:30—1:30 pm, EDT

March 17, 2020

Still time to register!



Students with disabilities are to receive education in their least restrictive environment, which means that students should participate with their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate. This webinar will look at child, family, and curriculum issues to consider as the IEP team meets and discusses the individual needs of each student, related to supports and services, ensuring success in their LRE.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

Our STEP team members continue to offer workshops, training, and support on a variety of topics related to effective family engagement and how to successfully navigate special education. Through our efforts on the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), we are working with a school in Wilson County and a school in Loudon County to blend unique family engagement strategies and activities with their existing work with families.

Karen Harrison presented a session at the 2020 Partners In Education conference on Thursday, January 30, "Remodeling Family Engagement: How to Engage Families by Improving Existing Activities." She offered strategies districts can use to maximize the effectiveness of their current work with parents and families, including quick self-assessments, planning grids to expand current touchpoints into more effective learning and relationship building opportunities, innovative strategies to gather data on family needs, and much more.

We are also very excited to announce our brand new website, which went live on February 28! Please visit it at www.tnstep.org, and let us know what you think. In the near future, we'll be inviting our community to do a tour of the website, to see all the new features!

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