

A United Front



As parents, we want what's best for all of our children; while following in the footsteps of our parents who guided us on the path to educational and behavioral success. After receiving the diagnosis, Oppositional Defiant Disorder for our son, we had no knowledge as to what it specifically entailed. As a mother I feel that raising boys versus girls is truly like night and day along with scattered showers and possible thunderstorms; hoping not to have a tornado roll through if our son has a meltdown. Our son receives wraparound behavioral health services and we as a family will begin receiving counseling to better understand how to support our son at home and while in school.

We provided the school with the recommendations given by his medical professionals and requested additional support for him via access to services if he meets the eligibility criteria under IDEA because tantrums, meltdowns, and defacing property became a daily occurrence for our son. Learning how to advocate for our son while in school has been exasperating until we were told to call Families Helping Families for support. Once I began speaking with an advocate, Shanida Mathieu, and learned that their staff includes parents who have shared experiences, I was relieved. The advocate listened to my concerns and requested my son's educational records to review in preparation for a scheduled meeting. She shared strategies that I agreed to use at home and share with his school.

Unbeknownst to me, the meeting scheduled was a manifestation determination meeting to address my child's behavior because he had been suspended ten times from school thus far. I truly believe that without having the guidance and support given this meeting would have not had the same outcome.

The support which I received prior to the meeting and the collaboration of the team was something I thought could not happen if I hadn't been prepared. Unbeknownst to me, the meeting scheduled was a manifestation determination meeting to address my child's behavior because he had been suspended ten times from school thus far. I truly believe that without having the guidance and support given this meeting would have not had the same outcome. I now know it takes time to learn and understand my parental rights and the special education jargon used by educators as it pertains to special education. The one phrase which Ms. Mathieu repeatedly used amongst the team members having to address our child's discipline will always resonate with me "Having a united front".