

A Parent Educator's Role:



What is a Parent Educator (PE) at The Parents' Place of Maryland (PPMD)?

A Parent Educator is a team member at PPMD whose primary goal is to empower families by providing them with the necessary knowledge, resources, and support to navigate the complex landscape of having a child or young adult with a disability and/or special healthcare needs. PPMD serves as the Parent Training and Health Information Center for the state of Maryland. Our Parent Educators at PPMD are also parents themselves and can share lived experience with the families we serve.

What can a Parent Educator do?

- **Empowers Families & Discusses Options:** PEs give families the tools and information they need to speak up for their children's education and/or health. They help families explore different choices and strategies for meeting their child's unique needs.
- **Provides Trainings & Resources:** They offer training sessions to teach parents about special education laws, rights, and processes; offer families community, state, and national resources based on the family's needs and concerns; and how to effectively partner and communicate with their child's school and healthcare provider.
- **Navigates Special Education Processes, Components, and Parental Rights:** They assist families in understanding the complex parts of special education, like Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and evaluations as well as make sure parents understand their rights.
- **Helps Families Prepare for Meetings:** Parent Educators guide families in getting ready for IFSP or IEP meetings. They make sure parents understand why these meetings are important, how they work, and how to communicate and partner with school staff.

What can't a Parent Educator do?

- **Advocate or Attend Meetings:** By way of definition, an advocate pleads the case of another and at PPMD we strongly believe that parents are the best advocate for their child. To assist parents, PEs provide information and support to help parents become informed and effective. PEs also do not attend meetings, but instead teach families how to fully participate in the meetings as an empowered advocate for their child.
- **Give Advice, Endorse, or Recommend:** PEs do not give specific advice or recommendations about a family's child. They focus on giving information, resources, and options so parents can make informed decisions for their child.
- **Act as a Content Expert:** While Parent Educators have knowledge and experience in navigating the special education and healthcare system, they are not lawyers, medical professionals, or therapists.

If a family has already hired an attorney or advocate, Parent Educators step aside. PPMD's services are free so this enables us to serve more families.