

The following is a transcript of the conference call presentation “The IEP Process and Understanding Parental Rights” that took place on August 29, 2018 in Virginia. The transcript was provided to Virginia Hands & Voices by Virginia Relay. Call moderator was Terese Urban. Presenter was Tracy Lee.

The recording has started. >> TERESE URBAN: Hi, everyone. This is Teri Urban. If you could just put your phones on mute, we're just going to wait another minute or two to ensure that everybody's called in. We've had almost 60 people register for the call today, so we don't want to be interrupted by the tones in the beginning as everyone chimes in. (Someone joining/leaving the call) Robin, are you in to the captioning? (Teri, someone wrote in the chat on the captioning) Okay. Perfect. I think I'm going to go ahead and get started. So good morning, everyone. This is Teri Urban, the chair of Virginia Hands & Voices. Thank you so much for joining our call this morning. I see that we have the captions up and running, and there can be an active chat through that service, so if there's any questions, I'll make sure to keep an eye up on that box. We know that everyone, parents and professionals, have very busy lives, and we appreciate you taking the time this morning to spend it with us. So let me just take a quick moment and introduce myself. Like I said, my name's Teri Urban. I'm the chair of Virginia Hands & Voices, and I'm also the parent of a deaf daughter, who is going to be starting third grade next year. If we can just all keep our phones on mute as we dial in, that would be great. For those who aren't too familiar with our organization, Virginia Hands & Voices, we are a nonprofit parent-driven organization dedicated to supporting children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing throughout the state. We are unbiased about communication choices, and we believe that the choices a family makes are the right choice. So we have been rebuilding our chapter for the past 1.5 years, and this is our first virtual learning opportunity, and we are very excited to have everyone call in, and as you know, the focus is going to be the IEP Process and Parental Rights. So before I turn this over to Tracy, like I said, we're going to ask that everyone keeps their phone on mute during the presentation. We know that it can be difficult, but if you can, please try to save all of your questions for the end of the presentation. We have allowed for 15 minutes at the end of this call for questions, so please have a pen handy if you need to jot something down thanks, everyone, for dialing in. I'm just going through and we're going to turn it over to Tracy. We hope that you received the email yesterday that has the agenda that we're going to go through along with the PowerPoint, and also, I just wanted to say a quick thank you to the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and their Virginia Relay program. They've ensured our deaf participants can have remote captioning, which is made through Hamilton Relay. All that said, I am very, very excited to introduce everyone to Tracy Lee. She is the Family Engagement Specialist and Special Projects Coordinator in the Office of Specialized Education Facilities and Family Engagement at the Department of Education. I attached a file to the email yesterday, if everyone's had a chance to take a quick look over, but she has been -- amongst many things, she has been an elementary schoolteacher, a preschool director, and a family resource coordinator, so, Tracy, we are honored to have you present to our audience this morning. >> TRACY LEE: Thank you. >> TERESE URBAN: I am going to mute my phone, and I will turn it over to you. >> TRACY LEE: Okay. >> TERESE URBAN: And there we go. Thank you. >> TRACY LEE: Okay. Great. Well, good morning, everybody. This is a little different for me. I've never done a training by phone before, and I'm used to have an audience full of faces staring back at me, so I hope I'm not too awkward with this. I'll tell you a little bit about myself personally before we get started. You've heard about me professionally. I have three kids. I have a daughter who's 21 years old, and she just started her senior year at Longwood University. She's

studying to be a teacher. She has ADHD, and she's gifted, and she had an IEP for speech when she was very small. I have a son, Ben, who's 19. I just delivered him to his freshman year in -- at Marymount Manhattan in New York City over the weekend. He's typically developing. And my son Ryan is 15 years old. He's getting ready to start his sophomore year next week, and he has Dysgraphia, so I have been on both sides of the IEP process and eligibility side. I've been on the professional side and the parent side, and it is a very different feeling, a very different circumstance depending on what side of the table that you're on. So what we're going to talk about today, we have four agenda topics. The first thing we're going to talk about is your goals during an IEP meeting, and then we're going to talk about helping the school understand your perspective because, like I just said, it's a different perspective when you come in as a parent than it is when you come in as an educator, and a lot of times we parents are a little bit apprehensive about helping the schools understand our perspective, but we really do need to find our voices and help them to do that because if they can understand where we're coming from and we can understand where they're coming from, our outcomes for our kids are going to be much better. The third thing we're going to talk about is understanding your parental rights. And then the last thing we're going to talk about is before -- (People talking in the background) >> TERESE URBAN: Wait. Tracy, this is Teri. I'm sorry to interrupt. Can everyone please make sure you put your phones on mute while we have the presentation just to eliminate any background noise? Thank you. >> TRACY LEE: Thanks. Okay. And then the last thing we're going to talk about is before, during, and after the meeting, how you prepare for -- I mean for IEP meetings and how -- the best practices for going through those meetings. Some of you may have a PowerPoint in front of you. I sent that to Teri, and I think she emailed it out, so I will let you know when I'm going to switch slides so you can know when to switch slides yourself. If you don't have the PowerPoint, it's not a big deal. You should be able to follow along perfectly fine. I really just have talking points there, so you should be fine with or without it. We're on the very first slide right now that says Tips for Navigating the IEP Process and Understanding Parental Rights and I'm getting ready to switch slides. All right. The next slide says What are your Goals. I'm going to switch again. Now you're on a slide if you have it that says Remember your Goals. When you are going through the IEP process, I want you to remember that you have two main goals in mind. The first goal leads to the more important goal, which is the second goal. So your first is to build and maintain a solid working relationship with all school personnel. The stronger and more trusting that relationship is, the more likely it is that you will be able to ensure that your child receives FAPE. FAPE is the acronym that we use for Free and Appropriate Public Education, so if you switch slides. At the top you'll see where it says Free Appropriate Public Education, and then FAPE in parentheses. This is the legal definition of FAPE. You can read through that at your leisure if you don't have the PowerPoint, Teri can send it to you so that you will have the legal definition, but we're going to go ahead and we're going to scroll past this to the next slide, where it says The Rowley Standard vs. Endrew F. These are the two Supreme Court cases that helped people to understand what FAPE actually means. We know that every child is supposed to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education, but what the heck is that? So the first Supreme Court case on FAPE occurred on June 28th, 1982. That was when the decision was handed down. It was the U.S. Supreme Court decision, boyfriend education of the Hendrick Hudson -- this is satisfied when the IEP is reasonably calculated when you enable the child to receive educational benefits, so receive education benefit is the key phrase there. Endrew F. was a case that was heard in January of 2017, so just about a year and a half ago and it was decided in March of '17, so it's very recent, and that was the very first case that was

heard since the Rowley case. The reason it was heard was this: There were many circuit courts across the country that were using that was saying educational benefit was received when the child was receiving de minimis, which is the Latin word for minimum educational benefit. So some were saying that as long as a school division was providing an IEP that gave a child minimum educational benefits that that was good enough, that that's where the bar was, and there were other circuit courts in this country that were saying that educational benefit -- that the bar would be meaningful educational benefit. Well, those are two pretty different standards, minimal benefit vs. meaningful benefit, so when you have several circuits across the country and they are applying a law differently, that's how a case gets to the Supreme Court often. So the Endrew F. case helped us determine what actually is educational benefit what is that bar, is it minimum or is it meaningful, so it helped to clarify that. The Endrew F. case did not overturn Rowley, it just clarified, and many, many of our attorneys at the Virginia Department of Education, I will say here I am not an attorney, I will tell you what we have been told, is the Virginia Department of Education's take on the Endrew F. decision. The Virginia Department of Education believes that Endrew F. told us that benefit is meaningful, but meaningful is different depending on each child, so educational benefit has to be meaningful in light of a child's specific circumstances. So what's meaningful educational benefit for my daughter, maybe, who had ADHD and was gifted, might look much different from meaningful educational benefit for a child who has significant cognitive or intellectual disabilities, so we have to look at each child and we have to look at that child's individual circumstances and we have to determine what meaningful educational benefit is for that child. And then another thing that this case did was put a little bit of the impetus on the schools to show through data that this benefit is being achieved, so it's not good enough for a school division to come to an IEP meeting and say, yes, this child has reached their goals, check, check, check. They need to be able to show why or how they came to that determination, so as parents, we should be able to say, well, show me the data to support that my child is meeting his or her goals or my child is receiving educational benefit. And the school has the impetus now to provide us with that information. Okay. So I know that's a lot of legal mumbo jumbo, and once again, I'm not a lawyer, but if you have questions at the end, I can try to answer them, and if I can't, I can point you in the direction of somebody who can. Okay. I'm going to switch slides now. We're on a slide that says Help the School Understand your Perspective, and we're going to flip one more time. Okay. One thing that we need to understand is that educators and parents come to the IEP team table with different jobs to do. The parent has to get one, two, three, maybe four, five kids from birth to adulthood in the most whole way possible. Educationally, spiritually, physically, emotionally, the whole package. The teacher's job and the school's job is to get many, many, many kids from August or September through May or June knowing a specific amount of information, so it's not that either of us is wrong, it's just that both of us have different jobs to do, and sometimes we come to the table with different perspectives because of that. As the parents, we need to be brave and we need to find our voices and we need to raise our hands sometimes and we need to say hold up, let me explain to you my perspective. So we're going to go through this slide, and if you don't have the slide in front of you, I'll read it out loud. The first thing we sometimes need to say is I'm not an educator, please explain this to me in a way that I understand. Very often in special education we speak in acronyms. I just did it a few minutes ago when I said FAPE for Free Appropriate Public Education. We also tend to use words that nobody understands besides the people who created these terms, so we, as parents, a lot of times, I know when I walk into an IEP meeting -- and I will tell you my husband's an attorney and I work at the Virginia Department

of Education, so when we walk in, we should be feeling fairly confident about things, and that is not the case. When I walk into an IEP meeting, I my stomach flip-flops every single time I go into one because it's a totally different situation when you're talking about your own child, and sometimes even I and my husband, we hear things that we don't understand, and we have to say, hold on, I don't understand what you're saying, I need you to break this down for me break this evaluation down for me, explain to me what this means because the last thing you want to do is get to the end of an IEP and sign something thinking that you understood it and then find out later that you didn't, so if you don't understand, you just need to say hold on, I don't understand that acronym or I don't understand this term or I don't understand these test results and let them explain it to you. Very often, they don't even realize they're doing it. And when we point it out to them, they're more than happy to explain everything that we need explained to us. The next one is I'm not questioning you because I disagree, I'm only trying to understand. Very often when parents receive a diagnosis for their child, especially in the beginning, your mind is Reiger a little bit, and -- reeling a little bit, and the way that some of us gather information to do this sort of rapid-fire questioning thing, and to the professionals on the other side of the table, it can come across as an interrogation, it can come across as us saying, I don't trust you, I don't believe you, when what we're really doing is trying to gather as much information as possible. So you might -- if you find that you're doing that -- and my husband does this a lot. I have to point it out to him, and he will say, look, aim not trying to be disa-- I'm not trying to be disagreeable, I'm not trying to interrogate you, I'm really just trying to figure this out. I'm a big proponent of just putting it out there, so if you can tell them this, you can put their minds at ease, and they become a little more comfortable with answering your questions. No. 3, let me explain to you what a typical evening in my home looks like. For some of us, as educators, we -- you know, we have kids just like you all have kids, and let's say I have a 13-year-old son. I might have to tell him three times to take a shower, but eventually he's going to get in the shower and he's going to take it himself. As parents with children who have significant disabilities, our lives often look very different, so I might have to say to my son, let's take a shower, but what that means in our house would be I have to get him to the shower, I have to get his clothes off, I have to get him in, I have to wash him, I have to convince him to get out, I have to dry him off, dry me off, dry the bathroom off, get him back in clothes, and by that time, 45 minutes has passed. So sometimes teachers will say things to us like, we need you to read more with your child, and our response is typically sometimes to just roll our eyes and sigh heavily because we're thinking, when the heck exactly would you like me to read more to my child? What we have to do is tell the teachers and tell the administrators, let me explain to you what my home life looks like because I have a child with a disability, a significant disability, our lives look different, and what takes you five minutes in your house takes 45 minutes in my house, and that's just for the shower. And when we do that, very often, the rest of the IEP team will say, wow, I hadn't thought of it that way, and they'll say, okay, well, let's come up with something different. Maybe we can read more with him at school or maybe we can find a work-around, but they're not going to be able to do that unless, once again, we find our voices and we say, Hold on a second, this isn't going to work for me because you have to understand what my home life looks like. The next one sort of dovetails that. I have other children who also need my attention. Many of us who have children with disabilities also have children that don't have disabilities, and while much of our time and attention has to be focused on the child with the disability, we do have to actually acknowledge our other children every once in a while, and so sometimes we need to point out to the IEP team our entire life's focus cannot be on this specific child, we have

other children, we have majors, we have -- marriages, we have jobs, we have our own health issues, please keep that in mind. The next one, Please clarify what it is that you would like for me to do. Let's go back to the We'd like you to read more with your child. Well, sometimes we don't know what that means. That's a very broad statement, so as a parent, I want to know, well, what are we reading? Are we reading a chapter book, are we reading a second grade, you know -- like a second grade reader, am I reading to him, is he reading to me, are we reading for five minutes, are we reading for an hour? I need specific instructions. And, once again, that's where we need to find our voices. We need to say Hold on a second, I'm happy to do this, but you need to tell me exactly what it is that you would like for me to do because the last thing we want to do is to do it incorrectly. If the teacher wants us to read one chapter out of a chapter book for 15 minutes and have us alternating reading back and forth, what we don't want to be doing is have the child reading out of a science textbook for an hour with me reading to him. So we need to know exactly explicitly what it is that they need us to do, and we need to make sure that they understand that that's what we need from them. And then the last one, I have hopes and dreams for my child that may seem unreasonable to you, but let's try to aim for them anyway. As parents, we have very lofty dreams for our kids, sometimes loftier than school personnel has, and what we have found -- I think what most of us can say we have found and what we have found in the field of education is the higher we aim, the higher the kids go, and if we're -- let's say we're aiming for them to get a college degree. Well, they might not reach that, but maybe they'll get a standard high school diploma, which might have been much different than they would have gotten had we been aiming for the college degree, so they might not reach the lofty goals that we set, but chances are if we make lofty goals for them, they're going to reach higher than they would have otherwise, and, once again, that's just something that we need to say to the school personnel. I have hopes and dreams for my child, and I know that you might think that he or she might not get there, but let's just try to aim for them anyway. Let's try to take small steps toward them and just see where we get. Okay. So helping the schools understand your perspective is enormously important. The more that we can understand each other, the much -- it's a much easier circumstance for us to be able to work together. All right. How am I doing on time here? Teri, if you could give me a five-minute warning when I'm at 25 minutes, I would appreciate t >> TERESE URBAN: Sure. Sure. I think this is great. Everyone's engaged, so keep on going. >> TRACY LEE: All right. We're halfway through. We're Understanding your Rights, and I'm going to flip to the next screen. This says Examples of your Rights at the top, and note, this is an important sentence in presence these if you have it. This list is not all inclusive. This list I'm going through is not all of your rights. The procedural safeguards document that you should receive at the beginning of every eligibility and IEP meeting, that is your full list of rights. We're just going to hit some of the hot topics here. And I'm going to try to anticipate some of your questions by remembering the questions that I have every time that I do this presentation, so hopefully I'll hit some of them before you even have to ask them. No. 1, you have the right to advocate for your child without fear of retaliation, and that's retaliation against you or your child, okay. So, for example, if you have a job where you're doing contract work, maybe inside of a school, and then you have a disagreement with the school and suddenly you find that you're not welcome there anymore to do your contract work, you might wonder at that point if that's retaliation. You have the right to advocate for your child without any fear of that happening to you or to him or her. No. 2, you have the right to advance notice, invitation of all meetings. Now, all meetings, when I say "all meetings," I mean the big ones, and the big ones are the ones that are named. For example, eligibility meetings, IEP

meetings, manifestation determination meetings, child study meetings. What is not a meeting that you have a right to be invited to -- let's say, for example, your child has a reading goal and your child's reading teacher is having some difficulties helping your child meet that goal. So after school in the teacher's lounge, your child's reading teacher meets with three other reading teachers so they can talk about some strategies that might help your child reach that goal. That's technically a meeting, but it's not a meeting that you have a right to be invited to, okay. It's an informal meeting among professionals. It's not one of the big ones. So when we say advanced notice and invitation to all meetings, that would be IEP, manifestation determination, eligibility, and child study meetings. (Background noise) You have the right to meet at a mutually agreed upon date, time, and location. Here is what's not a mutually agreed upon date, time, and location. A parent saying, I can only meet on Saturdays at 4:30. On the flip side, this is also not a mutually agreed upon date, time, and location. Our school only does IEP meetings on Thursdays at 1:30 during our activity period, okay. Both sides have to come together to work in a good-faith effort to come to a mutually agreed upon date, time, and location, and you can be creative with this. If there's not a time that a parent can get there but a parent can participate via FaceTime or Skype or something like that, that's 100% permissible. We can be creative with this. We just -- we all have to work together to try to come to that place where we can mutually agree upon a date, time, and location. You always have the right to record audio -- audio record eligibility, IEP, and manifestation determination meetings. Having said that, just because you have that right does not mean that they have to provide the equipment for you. You have to -- if you're going to audio record the meeting, you have to provide your own equipment to do that. So that -- I mean, in this day and time, it's pretty easy. Most people have a smartphone. You can just hit Record on that and that's pretty easy to do, but you do have to bring your own setup to do that. You have the right to request to video record. Now, this one's one that gets a little difficult. So -- I'm sorry, my phone just dinged with a text message. I apologize for that. Okay. You have the right to request to video record. What that means is this. You have the right to request to video record, and this he can say yes or they can say no, but if they say no to you, you have the right to say, Show me your written policy stating why it is that I can't video record. So school divisions, they -- they can make policies about video recording, and their policy might be we never permit video recording, or their policy might be we permit video recording under the following circumstances, but if you ask to video record and they say no and you say, Show me your written policy and they can't provide you with one because there isn't one, then you get to video record. But if you ask to video record, they say no, you say show me the policy in writing, and they show you the written policy and it tells why you can't, for example, we never allow video recording, then you can't video record. >> Ms. Gray, please call 4640. Ms. Gray, 4640. >> TRACY LEE: I hope that makes sense to everybody. If not, you can ask me at the end. The next bullet point, you have the right to discuss any concerns or input that you may have regarding your child's IEP accommodations, anything like that, so you have the right to make sure that there's time at the IEP meeting for you to discuss any concerns, any issues that you would like to talk about. What they can't do is leave 60 seconds at the end for parent input and then expect you to get through all of your stuff in that amount of time. You have to actually have the time to get through your concerns and input. You have the right to bring and have reviewed any type of documentation that you want. It can be doctor's notes, it can be anything. It can be -- you know, if your astrol jer provided you with some sort of input and you want to bring it, you absolutely have the right to bring it and have reviewed. It might not necessarily drive a decision on its own, but you have the right to bring it and you have the right to have the entire IEP team review that

information. And then finally, you have the right to bring other individuals and have them assist you during meetings. You can bring an advocate, you can bring an attorney, you can bring your next-door neighbor. You can bring anybody that you want to bring. A little note about attorneys. There has been -- there are always questions about do I have to let them know that I am going to bring an attorney? The legal answer to that, from what I understand, once again, my little caveat, I'm not a lawyer, but what I have been told is that there is case law that has been established that says that you do not have to let them know that you're bringing an attorney, and they have to have the meeting anyway, even if their attorney is not present. Now, from a practical perspective, I want to advise you against showing up with an attorney without letting them know first, and there are two reasons for that. The first one is practical and it's money-based. So just because this case law has been established, that doesn't mean that every principal in every building across Virginia has gotten that message, so here's what might happen. You show up with your attorney, the principal says, Nope, we're not having this meeting without our attorney present, and so your attorney says, Yes, you will because case law has been established that says so, and the principal says, Well, I'm certainly not taking your word for it, I'm going to find our attorney, and if our attorney tells me that's the case, then we'll have the meeting. So the principal calls his attorney, who may be in his office, may not be in his office, he or she may be in court, who knows where the heck they are. So principal leaves a message. 45 minutes later, the attorney calls back and says, Yep, you have to have the meeting. So the principal comes out and says, Okay, let's have the meeting. So what's just happened is you've just paid your attorney -- and attorneys are not cheap -- to sit in an office for almost an hour. That's an hour of billable pay so that the principal could find out that, yes, you have to have the meeting. To me it's just -- it's a big waste of time -- it can be a big waste of time and a big waste of money if the principal in the building does not understand that the meeting is supposed to take place. So from a practical perspective, I think that it's just not a good idea, that you might want to let them know ahead of time so you're not wasting a bunch of money on this attorney's time sitting in an office. The other reason is because if we go back to our two goals, one is to make sure that your child receives FAPE, and one way to get there is your second goal, which is building and maintaining a solid working relationship with school personnel. It's not very good for relationship building from that perspective to walk in to any meeting with an attorney without letting somebody know your attorney's coming. It's going to sort of set everything off on the wrong foot. So I am not saying don't bring an attorney. I 100% believe sometimes bringing an attorney is necessary. I just think from a practical perspective, it's best practice to let them know ahead of time that you are bringing your attorney. Now, let's go back to you have the right to bring other individuals and have them assist you during meetings. There have been circumstances when a parent has walked in with some and the school division has said to them, Well, we don't feel like this person that you brought knows the child well enough to be able to contribute, so they can't stay. They don't get to decide that. The parent gets to decide who to bring for any reason, so you get to bring who you want, when you want to your child's IEP meetings. That's your decision, not theirs, okay. All right. We are going to flip to the next slide, What you can do to Make your Meetings Run More Smoothly. >> TERESE URBAN: Tracy, this is Teri. I'm going to give you a five-minute warning at this point. >> TRACY LEE: Okay. I can get through this in five minutes. >> TERESE URBAN: Okay. Wonderful. >> TRACY LEE: Thanks. Next slide, prior to the meeting, you want to keep all of your child's records in one place. It's just easier for you not to have to run around the morning of an IEP meeting when you're probably already a little nervous having to find things, so as you receive

documents for your child, I would suggest that you keep them in a folder or a binder and put that someplace in your house where you always know where it is. Read through all information that the school sends home prior to the IEP meeting. I think this is very important if you're like me, I can't read and comprehend if a roomful of people is staring at me while I'm trying to do it, so I would read through everything ahead of time, jot down any questions you might have. To me, it just seems like it's going to be a little bit easier for you to understand what you're reading. The next bullet point here, give thought to what you believe your child's specific problems, issues, strengths, and talents are. If we're honest, we are at IEP meetings because of our child's problems and issues, okay. That's the reason we're having them, because our child is struggling in some way. You, the parent, know your child better than anybody, and if you can come up with a list of your child's strengths and talents to take with you to that meeting, very often you can draw from the list of strengths and talents to help with the list of problems and issues, but you, as the parent, know what those are, so I would say to -- I would ask you to sit down before a meeting and write them down, make an actual list of your child's strengths and talents so that hopefully the whole IEP team can draw from that. Make a written list of questions and items that you want to cover because there's nothing worse than walking to your car after an IEP meeting and going, oh, no, I forgot to ask that question. So write down your list of questions and check them off as you get to them during the meeting. Determine whether you will bring your child to the meeting, and I am a huge proponent of bringing a child to an IEP meeting. I think as young as possible, I think it's best for the IEP team to keep in mind why we're there. It's because of this little person or big person in some circumstances. Sometimes a kid can't handle an entire IEP meeting. In that case, I would bring them maybe at the beginning, and you either introduce them or they introduce themselves and maybe they can just say a few words, this is what I like, this is what I don't like, this is what I can do well, this is what I can't do well, this is what I need help with. If your child absolutely doesn't want to come -- and I had a child who felt like that for the first couple of years that he had an IEP, he was not interested in being there, and that's fine. Take a picture and frame it and put that picture frame right up on the table so that everybody remembers, we're not here because of you, we're not here because of me, we're here because of this face in this picture frame, and this is where we need to focus our attention. Again, let the school know if you plan to invite anyone to the meeting, especially an attorney. Once again, you don't have to do that, but we've already talked about why it's a good idea. Also, for issues of space. If you're planning to come with four or five people, often they have us meeting in teeny tiny little conference rooms, and what you don't want is the first 20 minutes of your IEP meeting having to be spent finding a bigger space, so if you're going to bring several people, let them know so the space can accommodate you. And then become informed about your rights and the school's obligations, and we've already talked about that a little. Next slide, right before the meeting, arrive a few minutes early. Once again, you're probably going to be a little bit nervous. I know I always am, and running in at the last minute certainly don't help that, so arrive a few minutes early. Shake the hands of those present and offer a smile, even if you have to bite the inside of your cheek while doing it. Sometimes our relationships are starting off in a not-so-great place, but at least let's try to start off on a positive note, so shake hands and smile. And then find out how much time is scheduled for the meeting. You should have already been told this ahead of time, but you -- I always like to confirm that because I have my list of questions, I have my list of concerns, and I want to make absolutely certain that we are going to have time in that meeting to get through them. Next slide, During the Meeting. Show respect and expect -- show respect and expect it from others; manage your emotions. I've heard some people say that if

you feel like you're going to start to cry -- and I will tell you I have cried during eligibility and IEP meetings, guzzling water can help. For whatever reason, that makes the tears sometimes stop. Something else you can do is just say, I need to step out for just a second, and get yourself back together and come back in. Be specific and clear about what it is that you want, where it is that you're going, and what it is that you're asking for. Stay in the present. This isn't the time to say, yeah, well, four years ago you all did such-and-such and so-and-so. That's in the past, just let it stay there. Let's concentrate on today and moving forward. Next bullet point, offer and listen to options. We are the experts on our kids. I told you that before, and I blah ev it 100%, but the educate -- believe it 100%, but the educators are best on instruction, and very often parents go in knowing what accommodations we want for our kids, but I know it's happened for me that I know what I want when I walk in, and then I hear what they're offering, and then I realize what they're offering is better than what I was asking for, so stay opened minded for what they're offering for your child. Once again, if you're unfamiliar with terms that you use, you don't want to sign an IEP thinking you understand what was happening and then you didn't. Use praise for the staff for their hard work, because even if you're angry or upset with them, believe me when I tell you this, they're not in it for the glory or the money and they're working very hard on your child. End by summarizing what you believe you heard. When you get to the end, before you put your signature on that piece of paper, say to them, Okay, so this is what I understand, this, this, this, this, and this, and if they say, yes, and you feel comfortable, sign. But what might happen, they say No, no, wait a minute, let's go back and revisit this because maybe you misunderstood or they misunderstood what was happening in the meeting at that point. Also understand, you don't have to sign right there. If you are more comfortable, again, sometimes it's hard to retain information when everybody's staring at you. If you feel better about taking it home and sleeping on it overnight and signing it the next day and sending it back, that's perfectly fine. And then finally, end the meeting on a positive note, if possible. It is always possible. There has been research and communication that shows if you take a bunch of negative information -- or a bunch -- a negative communications exchange and it's sandwiched in between positive, so let's say at the beginning you shake hands and smile, and then there's a bunch of yucky stuff that happens, and then at the end, you say I really appreciate your time, thank you for working so hard on behalf of my child, it takes some of the negative emotional charge out of some of that negative stuff that happened in the middle, and that goes back to that relationship-building thing. The stronger our relationships are with these people, the better chance our kids have of receiving everything that it is that they need to receive, to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education. And then the last slide, a few things teachers and administration would like you to keep in mind. We are human and we are not perfect. When we make mistakes, please try to be forgiving. We are well educated and specialists in our field. Most of our ideas are research-based and effective. Please don't begin our relationship by treating me as your enemy, I really do want to be your ally. Very often as parents we hear horror stories about things that happen with the schools and we sort of go in with our defenses up. Start the relationship giving everybody the benefit of the doubt, and very often you're going to be pleasantly surprised. Finally, if you have an issue with me, please bring it to my attention so I can solve it. Going straight to the top of the chain of command isn't always the most effective strategy. If you have a problem with a teacher, I would say go to the teacher first and see if you can solve it that way because I would say 90% of the time you can, and then follow the chain after that, whether it's an assistant principal, then the principal, the special ed director, the superintendent, the school board, the State Department of Education, try to follow that -- that

flow and that chain. It just -- it makes it much easier to get your problem solved if you do follow it -- follow that path. Okay. And then the last slide is sources, and I am finished with my part. So I am very opening to answering any questions that you guys might have. >> TERESE URBAN: Yay! This is Teri. That was wonderful. Thank you, Tracy. >> TRACY LEE: Good. You're welcome. Thank you. >> TERESE URBAN: That was so informative and I learned a lot of stuff. >> TRACY LEE: Good. >> TERESE URBAN: That was wonderful. Thank you so much. So now let's open up. We have a little bit more time. We can open up the meeting for questions. We just ask that when you do ask a question, if you can take your phone off mute and identify yourself first, first name is just fine, just so our captioner can relay that information. It's entirely up to you if you want to state whether you're a parent or a professional along with which part of the state you are calling from, and then, again -- >> TRACY LEE: And I will also say, if I can't answer a question, what I might ask you to do is email me your question, and then I can either find the answer or find the person that can give you the answer. >> TERESE URBAN: Okay. Perfect. And then if anybody who is accessing the remote conference captioning wants to ask a question through there, I've got my eye on that, so does anybody have any questions for Tracy? (Background noise) >> Can you hear me? >> TRACY LEE: I can. >> ROBIN: Okay. This is Robin Homeford. I am a teacher of the deaf and hard-of-hearing, but I also have a hearing loss. My question is for the parent, how much advanced notice would they want to have advance copy of the IEP? >> TRACY LEE: You mean to have a draft copy? >> ROBIN: A draft copy, yes. >> TRACY LEE: Okay. There's nothing in the regulations that says the school division has to provide a draft copy of the IEP. They can if they wish, but they don't have to, and I'll tell you why that is. Some school divisions do provide them and some don't, and the reason that some don't is because there are some parents who get upset about the idea of a draft IEP because they feel like that means that some predetermination has happened, so they feel like, well, if you have a draft IEP, then, obviously, some people have talked about it ahead of time and come up with this, and I wasn't involved in that process. So they don't like that. Other parents -- and I tend to be one of these parents -- I like the draft IEP, so some school divisions, depending on what their experiences have been with parents, they don't provide them at all or some do, and because there's nothing in the regulations that states when to provide them or not to, it can happen anywhere from five minutes to two weeks before the IEP meeting. So there is nothing that says when it has to be provided because there's nothing that says it does have to be provided. Does that make sense? >> ROBIN: Yeah. I like to provide it, but I also tell the parents who write all over it, the -- highlight whatever because it's just a draft. >> TRACY LEE: Right, xactsexactly. My school division does actually provide them, but some don't. (Child making noises in the background) Do we have any other questions? >> Hello. >> TRACY LEE: Yes. >> SHELLEY: This is Shelley. I am a parent, and I have a three-year-old son who is -- wears Phonak hearing aids, so he is partially deaf. My question is, is that I went through the IEP process maybe twice, and they said to me that he's developing well, but I still see that there are some articulation issues with his speech, and he's been having a very hard time at preschool right now communicating and as a result getting frustrated and hitting and just not doing very well at a school that he's been at since he was four months. >> TRACY LEE: Okay. >> SHELLEY: And he's in a more instructor-led classroom right now in preschool, so that's another transition. So my question is, is that -- are there any tips on -- or advice on how -- I'm about to have my IEP meeting tomorrow for screening, and I just want to be able to let them know that I do see that he needs some sort of services. I've gotten a doctor's note from my pediatrician about how he might need some services, maybe not a full immersion deaf and hard-of-hearing

school, but I think he really does need something, and I've been trying to get him through the process maybe twice already, and they've declined him services. >> TRACY LEE: Okay. This has -- this sounds like it's going to be a little bit more of an involved one-on-one question. Would you mind if I gave you a call when this is over or you can call me, either one? >> SHELLEY: Oh, yeah, absolutely. >> TRACY LEE: Okay. If -- if Teri could -- Teri has my email address, and you might as well. Teri, if you could provide her with my email address, and then you can email me and we can set up a time to talk. >> TERESE URBAN: Yes, I can do that. Absolutely. >> SHELLEY: Sounds perfect. Thank you. >> I'm Katherine Sheldon, I'm a social worker, and I wondered if I could get your points also then because I work at CHKD, and I'm part coordinator of our cochlear implant team, our multi(Inaudible) team, so I have gone to meetings with some of our kids that are hearing impaired or have the implants, so I would love to know some thoughts that you're going to say too, then, if that's okay. >> TRACY LEE: Sure, yeah. I mean, what -- basically what I was going to tell her -- and I was go to say this, I was going to refer her to Wanda Counsel, who is our deaf and hard-of-hearing specialist, because my role is more parental rights and things like that. I don't know information specific to this disability, so I was going to hook her up with Wanda. So I guess I would say at this point, if any of you have questions that are specific to the deaf and hard-of-hearing population, Wanda Counsel is the person at VDOE that you would speak with, and I can go ahead and give that -- that email address out now to any of you who would like to write it down. >> That would be great. >> TRACY LEE: Sure. It's Wanda W-a -- n ---a.like a period, uoncil@doe.virginia.gov. (Wanda), and then if you have other questions for me after this is over, my email address follows that same format. Instead of Wanda Council, it would be Tracy.Lee, and you can always get in touch with me after this is over as well. Like I said, if I can't answer your questions, I'll give you the person that can. >> TERESE URBAN: Traci, this is Teri. What I can do is I can just email everyone, you and Wanda's email address who registered for the webinar today. >> TRACY LEE: That's perfect. >> TERESE URBAN: Great. Does anyone else have any other questions before we wrap up? >> I have a question. >> TERESE URBAN: Okay. >> TRACY LEE: Okay. >> Hi. So my name is Mia. >> TRACY LEE: Okay. >> I'm a deaf mother. I have a hearing child. We will have the IEP process this week. >> TRACY LEE: Okay. >> We've done that for about the past three years. So the school is all right to deal with. I'm just curious about parents' rights related to -- I guess I'm just not satisfied with their evaluation of his education needs. >> TRACY LEE: Okay. >> MIA: So I'm just wondering -- so if I'm not satisfied with that testing system, what do I do next? >> TRACY LEE: You can request that other evaluations be done. You can also have them done independently, and then they would have to be reviewed by the IEP team. So those would be your next steps would be to request that they do specific evaluations. Have you done that? Have you requested the specific ones that you want? >> MIA: So I did ask. >> TRACY LEE: Okay. >> MIA: So right now I think I'm trying to get paperwork done for the IEE? >> TRACY LEE: Okay. >> MIA: Something related with the school, and they're going to pay for an outside evaluation to take place. >> TRACY LEE: They are going to do that? >> MIA: Well, I'm in the process of getting that application going and figuring it out, so they're a little bit -- I don't know, I guess they seem to be trying to avoid it, I guess, a little bit, but he's already in fourth grade, and I'm noticing these things that are showing up as delayed, so I feel like we're wasting time. We don't want to -- >> TRACY LEE: Right. >> MIA: -- we don't want to wait on this stuff, we want to get everything taken care of now. The >> TRACY LEE: If you fill a paper out for the IEE process and for whatever reason they come back and say they won't do it, you also have the dispute resolution process available to you through the state. That's mediation, due

process, and filing a state complaint, and those are the processes that you use when you and the IEP team -- and you're part of the IEP team, but you and the rest of the IEP team simply cannot come to an agreement, when you've hit that wall on something, you're saying yes, they're saying no or vice versa, then you can go through the dispute resolution process, and that process is on our website. If you go to the DOE website -- let me pull it up for you real quickly. Okay. If you go to the DOE website, which is doe.virginia.gov, just like our email addresses are and go to the Search bar and put in dispute resolution, a screen comes up and explains all three of those processes to you, so if you go there and you look through those after this IEE thing, you know, if it doesn't work out the way you want it to, go to the dispute resolution page, and if you need any help understanding any of that, then you can get back in touch with me and I can go through each of those with you individually. >> MIA: Oh, okay. Thank you. I really appreciate it. >> TRACY LEE: You're welcome. >> TERESE URBAN: This is Teri. Do we have any other questions? No? Okay. Well, this wraps up our virtual learning opportunity. Thank you, again, Tracy. That was amazing. >> TRACY LEE: Thank you. I appreciate -- I appreciate you asking me to be on. It was fun, and I hope it wasn't too awkward. (Laughter) >> TERESE URBAN: No, no. >> TRACY LEE: I've never done it by phone before. >> TERESE URBAN: No. This is the best way to reach as many people throughout the state as we can. >> TRACY LEE: Okay, great. >> TERESE URBAN: I hope everyone who called in found value in the presentation. We appreciate everyone's time. I will send a follow-up email with the contact information, and then please shoot us an email a topic that you would like Virginia Hands & Voices to focus on virtually presenting next. Thank you, everyone, for calling in, and have a wonderful afternoon. >> TRACY LEE: Bye. >> Thank you. >> Thank you. Thanks.