

WHO WE ARE

Illinois' Parent Training & Information Center

Family Matters PTIC is the federally funded Parent Training and Information Center for the state of Illinois. Since 2002 we have provided education, support, resources, and community connections to families navigating special education, moving through key educational transitions, and seeking services in school and in the community.

Our purpose is simple: make sure families and self-advocates have the information they need to understand their rights under IDEA and to participate fully — and confidently — as equal members of their child's school team.

Our team knows the journey

Our Educational Support Coaches are primarily parents of students with disabilities. They bring both professional training and lived experience to their work with families.

Our approach

- **Empowerment, not representation.** We build your advocacy skills so that you can lead.
- **Partnership with schools.** We help families and school teams work with one another, not against one another.
- **Information you can actually use.** Plain-language guidance grounded in IDEA, Section 504, and Illinois rules.

An educational agency — not a legal one

Family Matters PTIC provides education, information, and coaching. We are not a legal services agency, and we do not provide legal advice, legal representation, or advocacy on your behalf. You remain your child's decision-maker and primary voice.

Community partners

We work alongside **Grupo SALTO**, **The Arc of Illinois**, and **Illinois Elevating Special Educators** to extend our reach and deepen our work with families across the state.

Join our Board of Directors

Family Matters PTIC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit governed by an active Board of Directors. We welcome family members, self-advocates, and community leaders who share our mission.

Apply at fmptic.org → Who We Are → How to Help

GET STARTED

Connect With Us



Family Matters PTIC

Toll free: 1-866-4FMPTIC (1-866-436-7842)

Fax: 217-318-3516

Hours: Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Web: www.fmptic.org

Find what you need online

Ask an Educational Support Coach — book a free 1:1 appointment

Schedule a Workshop — request a training for your group

Resources & Printable Guides

Event Calendar — upcoming trainings and webinars

Join Our Mailing List

Support in your language

Bilingual (English/Spanish) Educational Support Coaches are available to work with your family directly. Through our **online interpretation program**, we can also connect with families in many additional languages — at no cost to you.

Recursos en español → fmptic.org

Follow along

Facebook: [/FamilyMattersPTIC](https://www.facebook.com/FamilyMattersPTIC) · Instagram:

[@familymatters_il_ptic](https://www.instagram.com/familymatters_il_ptic) · YouTube: **Family Matters PTIC**

Get involved

There are meaningful ways to give back to Illinois families:

- **Serve as an Educational Surrogate Parent** for a student who needs a decision-maker.
- **Join our Board of Directors** — see inside for details.
- **Donate.** We stretch a dollar remarkably far.

Legal Disclaimer. Family Matters is not a legal services agency and cannot provide legal advice or legal representation. Information received from Family Matters is not intended as legal advice and should not be used as a substitution for legal advice.

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SERVING ALL OF ILLINOIS

You know your child best.

We help you put that knowledge to work at the IEP table.

Free education, coaching, and resources for families of students with disabilities — from the federally funded Parent Training and Information Center for Illinois.

BOOK A FREE APPOINTMENT



Scan to schedule time with an Educational Support Coach

www.fmptic.org

1-866-4FMPTIC · 1-866-436-7842

1:1 Educational Support Coaching

Work one-on-one with an Educational Support Coach. Coaching is individualized, confidential, and always free. Bring us a question, a stack of paperwork, or an upcoming meeting — we'll work through it together.

- **Special education navigation.** Understanding referral, evaluation, eligibility, and the IEP process from the first step forward.
- **IEP review and guidance.** We look at the document with you, explain what each section means, and help you identify questions to raise.
- **Section 504 navigation.** Understanding eligibility, plans, and how 504 differs from an IEP.
- **Meeting preparation.** Organizing your concerns, drafting questions, and knowing what to expect before you walk in.
- **Understanding evaluations and data.** Making sense of reports, progress monitoring, and present levels.
- **Community connections.** Linking you to services and supports beyond the school day.

Support through service transitions

- **Early Intervention → Early Childhood Special Education.** Preparing for the move at age three and the shift from an IFSP to an IEP.
- **Secondary transition.** Planning for employment, further education, and adult life — beginning at age 14½ in Illinois.

BILINGUAL COACHES AVAILABLE

[Book a coach → fmptc.org](https://fmptc.org)

How coaching works

1. **Reach out.** Call us or book an appointment online. There is no referral, no eligibility test, and no waiting list to join.
2. **Talk it through.** A coach listens first, then explains the process, the timelines, and the options in front of you.
3. **Leave with a plan.** Questions to ask, next steps to take, and the resources to back them up — carried out by you, in your own voice.

Trainings & Workshops

We deliver trainings across Illinois — in person, virtually, and on demand — for parent groups, schools, agencies, and community organizations. Sessions are built for families, in plain language, with time for real questions.

Topics include

- Special Education Basics
- IDEA Basics
- Section 504 Navigation
- Discipline in Special Education
- Secondary Transition Planning
- Mental Health and Behavioral Supports for Students with Disabilities
- Conflict Resolution in Special Education
- ...and many more, including sessions delivered in Spanish

[Request a training for your group → fmptc.org](https://fmptc.org)

FREE ONLINE COURSE

COMPASS: Special Education Navigation

COMPASS is our free, self-paced online learning program for parents and guardians — roughly **40 hours** of asynchronous instruction in navigating special education, from eligibility and the IEP through transition and dispute resolution.

Start any time, learn at your own pace, and return to the material whenever you need it. Available to families anywhere in Illinois at no cost.

[Enroll → fmptc.org](https://fmptc.org)

Curriculum, resources & conferences

Our team develops original curricula and family-facing resources, and helps plan and facilitate conferences built around the real learning needs of families navigating special education.

Between trainings, keep learning with:

- **Core Special Education Resources** — printable, plain-language guides to start with
- **Family Matters Minute** and our podcast series

Statewide Programs

ISBE GRANT PROGRAM

Educational Surrogate Parent Training

Family Matters PTIC holds the **Illinois State Board of Education Educational Surrogate Parent (ESP) Training Grant**.

We recruit and train volunteers across Illinois to serve as the educational decision-maker for students with IEPs who do not have a parent or guardian available to fill that role. Surrogates make sure no eligible student goes through the special education process without someone at the table for them.

Training is provided free of charge. If you want to serve a student in your community, we will prepare you for the role.

Secondary Transition & Self-Advocacy

Transition is a signature area of our work. We help students and families plan for employment, continued education, independent living, and community life — and we help young people build the self-advocacy skills to speak for themselves, lead their own IEP meetings, and shape their own futures.

Charting the LifeCourse

Our team is trained in the **Charting the LifeCourse** framework and uses its tools with families to picture a good life, identify the supports that make it possible, and turn that vision into concrete next steps.

LifeCourse Nexus tools & resources → lifecoursetools.com

[Explore the tools → fmptc.org/self-advocacy](https://fmptc.org/self-advocacy)

Who we serve

Parents, guardians, caregivers, foster and kinship families, self-advocates, and the professionals who support them — families of students and young adults with disabilities, ages 0–26, in every county in Illinois, at no cost.

Not sure where to start? Call **1-866-4FMPTIC** or book a coach at **fmptc.org**. There is no wrong question — and never a charge.