



Alternative Dispute Resolution Child-Focused, Effective and Free

**Offered by Facilitators from the
West Orange County Consortium for Special Education**

The West Orange County Consortium for Special Education (WOCCSE) offers parents and district staff in FVSD, HBCSD, HBUHSD, OVSD, and WSD professional facilitators trained in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). WOCCSE facilitators are available to help with any special education issues or concerns. As skilled facilitators, they can assist with any Individualized Education Program (IEP) issues. You can contact a WOCCSE facilitator and request an informal meeting, a confidential alternative resolution session, or just ask for advice over the phone.

The goal of WOCCSE facilitators is to help parents and district staff resolve conflicts early so that everyone can stay focused on meeting the educational needs of the child. WOCCSE facilitators provide a respectful, neutral environment in which specific concerns can be discussed. They can offer creative solutions, and assist with brainstorming ideas. They strive for early resolution of disputes, and they work to build collaboration by using a student-centered, outcome-oriented approach.

The following are some frequently asked Questions and Answers that help explain the ADR process.

Q. What is Alternative Dispute Resolution?

- A. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is an informal and effective way to resolve differences in a positive manner. It is a problem-solving process rather than an adversarial process, and it allows parties to communicate directly with each other to create a mutually agreeable solution. ADR encourages all parties to focus on the child's educational needs first and foremost and to maintain positive working relationships between administrators, site staff and parents.

Q. Why would I choose ADR?

- A. It is free, timely and effective. ADR keeps the decision-making in the hands of the parents and the educators and helps preserve important relationships. Participants who negotiate their own resolutions have more control over the outcome of a dispute and are generally more satisfied with the solution. The effectiveness of an agreement is enhanced when families and schools take mutual responsibility for developing solutions, as opposed to an agreement imposed by a third-party decision-maker. Also, agreements can usually be implemented within a short period of time after an ADR.

Q. How does it differ from an IEP meeting?

- A. An ADR session addresses only those areas where there is a difference of opinion or a concern.

Q. Who are the people involved in an ADR session?

- A. Parents, a District representative and the WOCCSE facilitator.

Q. What happens in an ADR session with a WOCCSE facilitator?

- A. In an ADR meeting, the WOCCSE facilitator will give a description of the process, then ask parents to state their concerns. The facilitator will establish an understanding of the disagreement and then, encouraging open communication, help the parties work together to create a mutually agreed upon resolution. The WOCCSE representative is not a decision-maker, but an impartial facilitator.

Q. How long does it take?

- A. A WOCCE representative will return the phone call within 48 hours and a meeting will typically be scheduled within two weeks. ADR sessions are usually two hours in length.

Q. How are agreements documented?

- A. Depending on the concerns discussed, agreed upon changes may be documented through the IEP (amendment) process or a confidential settlement agreement.

Q. Is an ADR agreement confidential?

- A. Yes. However, some parts of an ADR agreement may need to be shared with others in order for it to be appropriately implemented. This will be clarified when a specific agreement is reached.

Q. Am I obligated by the ADR process?

- A. No, an ADR session is not binding. If you participate in an ADR activity and your concerns are not resolved to your satisfaction, you still have the right to request an IEP team meeting, mediation-only, or a due process hearing.

Q. What should I do to prepare?

- A. Bring ideas! Be prepared to discuss and explore creative solutions and to focus on positive outcomes.

Q. How do I initiate the process?

- A. A parent or district personnel can call the WOCCE facilitator to discuss how to proceed. The next step may be a phone conference, an ADR session, or an IEP team meeting.

To start the process, contact your district’s special education director OR to speak to a WOCCE facilitator, contact: Nancy Finch-Heurman, Director (714) 903-7000 ext. 504620

WOCCE Directors

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District Special Education Administrators

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