WHAT IS A SURROGATE PARENT?

If a child's parents cannot be located or if the child is a ward of the state, and if that child needs or may need special education, then a volunteer will be appointed to act as a surrogate parent. The surrogate parent is a person who is interested in making sure that the child gets an appropriate education. Unlike a child's real parents, the surrogate parent is only responsible for matters that affect the education of the assigned child. A surrogate parent is not responsible for any other aspect of care, such as making sure that the child is fed or clothed or has money. The surrogate parent keeps track of the education the child is receiving and makes sure that it is the most appropriate education.

As stated by law, surrogate parents should meet the following criteria:

The Surrogate Parent Should Have No Interests That Conflict with The Interests Of The Child Represented

For example, if a school system employee, say a special education teacher, were a child's surrogate parent and the school, which is the teacher's employer, wanted something for the child that the teacher didn't agree with, the teacher/surrogate parent might feel forced to settle for less than he or she thought was best for the child.

The Surrogate Parent Should Have Knowledge and Skills That Ensure Adequate Representation Of The Child

Completion of School District approved training will give a person these skills.

The Surrogate Parent Must Not Be An Employee of the State Or Any Local Government, Educational, Or Human Resources Agency Responsible For Or Involved In The Education Or Care Of The Child.

This is an elaboration of the first requirement, making it certain that someone with a possible conflict of interest isn't appointed to be a child's surrogate parent.

The following factors also should be considered when looking for a good match between surrogate parent and child:

If possible, a relative or a foster parent who is willing to complete the required training should be given the opportunity of being appointed the child's surrogate parent.

The advocate should be of the same race as the child, and have the same dominant language.

The surrogate parent should reside in the same general geographic area as the child.

For further information on becoming a Surrogate Parent, contact your local School District’s Special Education Office.

PS: As a foster parent, you can help other foster parents by becoming trained as a Surrogate Parent.

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