

School Advocacy Program Overview



The JBRF has been supporting me as a parent and my child who struggles with bipolar and Fear of Harm for the last 2 years. The school advocacy is top notch. They attended months worth of school and IEP meetings with me and advocated tirelessly for my child. When I had difficult choices to make they helped me think through my options to make the best choice for our family.

There is a very human aspect in how they deal with people that makes a very difficult journey more bearable. - Parent of a 13 year old with Bipolar & Fear of Harm

Mental health issues create challenges at school that increase stress, anxiety, and obstacles to learning. Navigating the school system can be difficult and overwhelming for parents — developing IEPs and 504 plans, knowing what accommodations their child needs to be successful, and ensuring those accommodations are implemented.

Even with a cooperative and collaborative school district as a partner, parents must still know intricacies of mental health diagnoses, symptoms, and treatments. These complexities can be difficult to understand, which makes it harder for parents to explain their child's needs to school personnel, and ensure the necessary accommodations are adhered to.

Without this understanding of the impacts of mental illness, schools sometimes refuse to offer an IEP, grant needed accommodations, or provide services that are essential to your child's success. This can cause your child to fall behind academically, socially, and emotionally. These unfortunate outcomes reinforce and perpetuate your child's resistance to going to school and can irreparably damage their self-esteem.

After periods of simmering conflict, many parents turn to attorneys to help make schools provide needed services. This option typically costs thousands

of dollars, involving an unpredictable number of consultations, each billed by the hour. While attorneys are experts in the law, they are not experts on mental illnesses and the unique impacts they have on children. Worse, this route takes an already stressful situation and escalates the tension and mistrust between family and school.

JBRF Is Here To Help

Every child, regardless of diagnosis, deserves to have access to learning and accommodations that will promote their success in school. JBRF believes that most times this goal can be achieved without the threat of lawyers and litigation.

JBRF's school advocacy program supports families throughout the long and complex process of requesting assessments for, developing, and implementing an IEP. JBRF provides guidance and support from an experienced mental health professional with specific expertise in diagnoses such as mood disorders, bipolar disorder, and Fear of Harm.

What We Offer

JBRF provides comprehensive supportive school related advocacy services to families at highly competitive rates.

Mental Health Expertise

Families meet with the mental health advocate (MHA) to:

- Learn about effective intervention strategies;
- Have your questions answered;
- Plan for meetings with the school.

The MHA will virtually attend meetings with the school as a direct support to the family. The MHA will educate school officials on:

- The mental health diagnosis;
- How its symptoms manifest;
- How they impact children;
- The specific mental health needs of your child.

The MHA will also provide context to school officials to help them understand:

- Symptom driven behaviors seen at school;
- How to manage them effectively.

These meetings can be with your child's full team of providers or with individual teachers or school officials.

JBRF executive director, Elizabeth Errico, is a mental health professional with more than 20 years of experience in the fields of counseling, psychotherapy, and education. She is a licensed psychotherapist and taught undergraduate psychology for nearly a decade.

Ms. Errico earned two master's degrees, one in psychological counseling and one in counseling and education, from Columbia University, Teachers College. She is a member of the American Counseling Association and the National Board of Certified Counselors.

Ms. Errico works tirelessly on behalf of families to ensure children have access to the mental health treatment they deserve.

You Don't Have To Go It Alone

Working to get your child the accommodations they need at school can be an exhausting and overwhelming task. But you don't have to do it on your own and you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

Let JBRF help you, your child, and your school get on the path to success.

Let's take the school experience from this...



to this...

