

February 6, 2017

Honorable Robert Giordano
Office of Administrative Law
33 Washington St.
Newark, New Jersey 07102
RE: MAC SPECIAL EDUCATION PROJECT

Dear Judge Giordano,

The purpose of this letter is to follow up on my telephone call to your chambers of last week regarding our organization's potential assistance for unrepresented parents in special education cases on Thursday settlement appearances and negotiations. We have received a donation specifically for this purpose. Hence, the outreach to explore whether or not such a project would be feasible and approved by the OAL.

Presently, two people are assigned to develop and implement this undertaking. One is Barbara Johnson, a MAC Trustee and a licensed paralegal, and myself. I have provided nonlawyer representation since 1978 in a variety of venues. At this developmental phase, we have considered the following as discussion points in moving this project forward. They are:

1. All MAC services are pro bono and without cost to either the OAL or the parent.
2. Either Mrs. Johnson or myself would assist and speak for the parents if necessary. Our authority would be equal to that of the school's attorney throughout the negotiations.
3. MAC is committed to furthering settlements of cases and will reserve two Thursdays a month, as well as a full working day, to provide parents with help and advice. We would not, however, litigate the case if it did not settle. Further, we could not be subpoenaed to discuss the case or our conversations with the parents if the case went to trial.
4. MAC will comply with all Uniform Procedure Rules of the agency.
5. MAC will develop a form, approved by the OAL, to explain to the parents what our role is regarding their dispute with the school district.
6. A mechanism would be developed to provide MAC with the petition and answer to the complaint, pertinent pupil records, and a room in which to review those records and meet with the parents. A one hour prep time is envisioned as adequate, with exceptions made in more complex cases. If a parent is non-English speaking we will endeavor to provide translation for the one hour preparation period and beyond if possible.

MAC fully appreciates that such a project as outlined above is new territory for both OAL and our organization. But we believe that the good which may be achieved outweighs those difficulties. We are prepared to meet with you to clarify or augment the elements of this project as soon as possible. Our goal is to have your agency comfortable with this effort and to provide unrepresented parents with needed services at no cost. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Arons, Director

Cc: Honorable Laura Saunders, ALJ
Barbara Johnson
MAC Board of Trustees