

**CADRE and JAMS Foundation Present:**  
***Voices from the Field***  
**Interview Clip #2 Transcript – Jody Manning**

**Marshall:** So Jody, how can advocates most effectively support and prepare parents for the challenging meetings that they may find themselves in?

**Jody:** There are a couple of key features that we find to be successful in preparing parents for challenging meetings. There are some things that they should concentrate on. One of the first things is communication. Parents should pay particular attention to their communication style and its effectiveness in the meeting. One of the key values that they should concentrate on is maintaining those relationships. They'll need to have continued relationships with those folks. So they'll want to make sure that their communication style is working for them in those meetings. Parents will also want to make sure that they use the data to let their voice be heard rather than opinions. So they want to provide any supporting evidence that they can to let the family, the team members, excuse me, be aware of why they're requesting these so that it comes from the data rather than their opinions. We have an exercise that we encourage parents to do that we call the parent homework sheet at Pacer Center and essentially it's taking a very close and critical look at the child's evaluation and documenting all of those needs from the evaluation on the left hand side of a document. When parents are done they should look at that Word document or chart, if they just put it on a piece of paper, and ask themselves if that's the child that they know and love. So they want to be sure that the family, excuse me, school has an accurate picture of their child as the child, the family knows and loves their child. When they are done with that document, again they ask themselves if that's the child that they know and love, and then they'll take a close look at the child's IEP and pull out any services that the school is currently providing to that child. They'll then write those on the right hand side of the parent homework sheet directly next to the needs that that service is supporting. So this parent homework sheet can serve as an agenda for the family to walk through with the school staff when they're together. If there are blanks on the right hand side then they will know that there is a problem area where perhaps those needs aren't being met with the current IEP. We would also encourage parents to make a list of any additional concerns that they have so that they can contribute to the agenda and feel like an active member of planning that IEP meeting. And lastly, we encourage parents to make good use of the prior written notice form. We encourage parents to understand that it's okay for them

to say, 'It looks as though we're in disagreement but please document your proposal on a prior written notice form and I'll be sure to consider that objectively and get back to you in writing.' Parents also might use that prior written notice form if they feel as though they're not being heard in requesting certain services for their child. Parents can say, in order to make sure that there aren't any stressed opinions in that, to say, 'This is my request. Please respond to my request in a writing via prior written notice form.'