



# Parental Engagement in the Special Education Process

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# Impact of Engaged Parents on Educational Outcomes



Higher Levels of  
School  
Engagement



Positive School  
Behavior



Higher Rates of  
Homework  
Completion



Increased  
Academic  
Performance

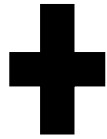
Higher Importance for Students Receiving Special Education



# Parental Engagement in Special Education Requires...



Communication  
between  
parents and  
school



Providing  
parents access  
to information



To promote parental  
engagement in systems and  
student level decision making  
and planning

# Barriers to Parent Engagement in Special Education

Parents may experience barriers to involvement:

- Time
- Informational resources
- Child behavior and communicative challenges
- Stress
- Quality of relationship with the school
- Role as an advocate for their child
- Lack of knowledge







What do you feel parents need to become engaged in the special education process?



# Role of Parental Knowledge

Parent Knowledge

Parent Engagement

Positive Student Outcomes

Evaluations

IEPs

Placement

Accommodations

Related services

Project 1:  
Special Education  
Knowledge and Resources  
Study



# Study Purpose

Parent ( $N = 153$ )

Experiences

Preferences

Q1. How do parents acquire information regarding special education services and systems?

Q2. Which special education services and systems topics do parents report being knowledgeable?

Q3. What are the optimal circumstances for parents to learn about special education systems and services?

Q4. What are existing barriers to increasing parents' knowledge of special education?



# Q1. How do parents acquire information regarding special education services and systems?

1. Conversations with special education teachers/professionals.

2. Paper handouts provided by the school.

3. Conversations with other parents at my child's school and in our community.

4. Conversations with local parent support agency staff.

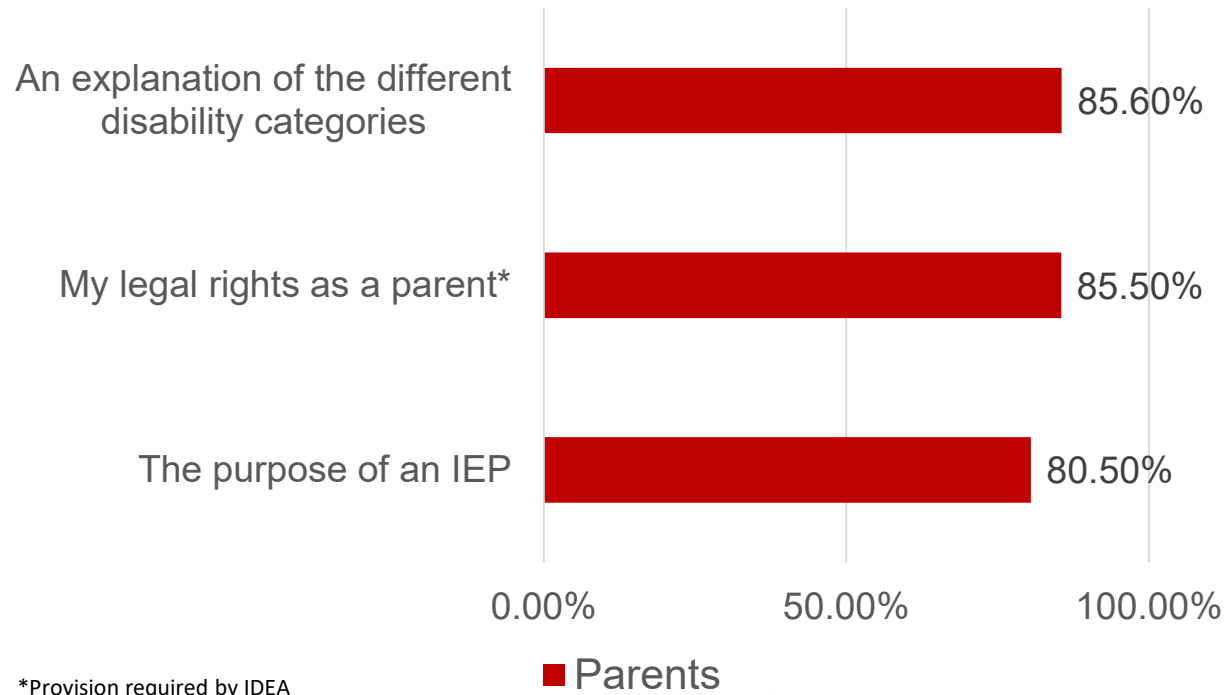
5. Regional or national websites for families of students receiving special education.



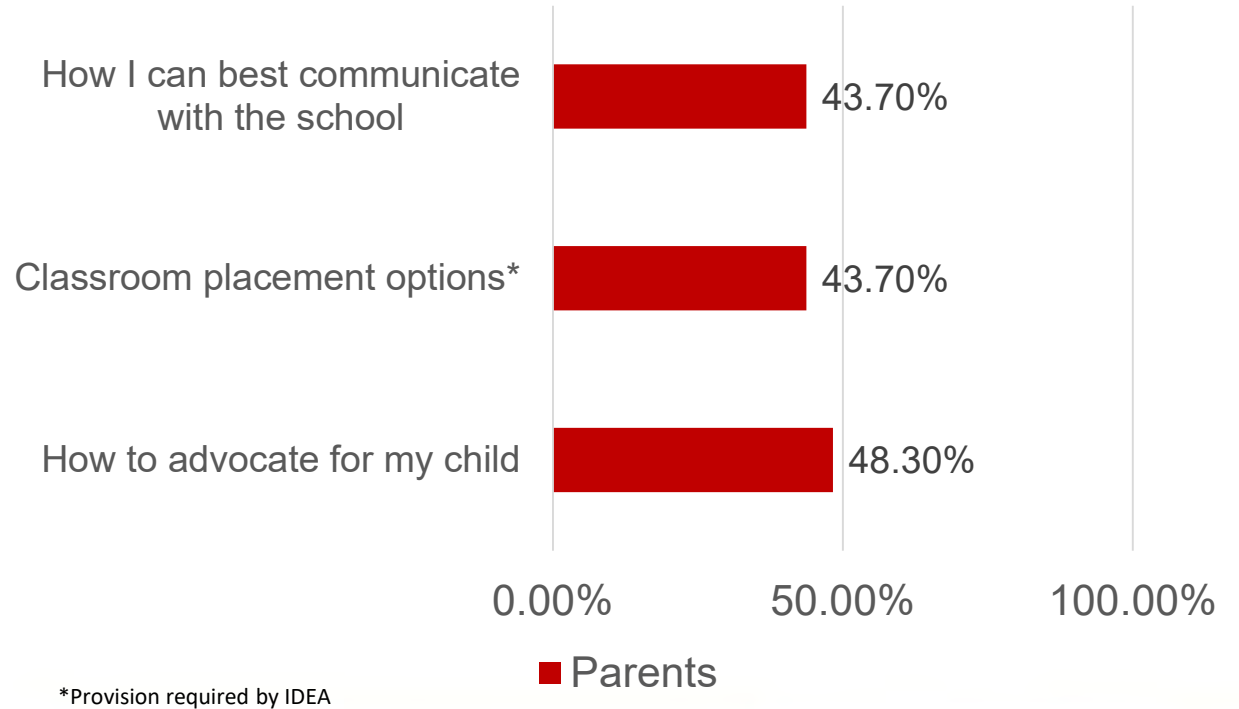


# What topics of information regarding special education services and systems do parents receive from the school?

## Highest Rated Content Topics



## Lowest Rated Content Topics





## Q2. Which special education services and systems topics do parents report being knowledgeable?

	Item	% Rated
Most Knowledgeable	How often IEP meetings will occur	60.0%
	People who will attend the IEP meeting	58.3%
	How I can advocate for my child	53.4%
	IEPs	50.7%
	How I can best communicate with the school	44.7%
Least Knowledgeable	My legal rights as a parent	38.6%
	How special education services work	34.8%
	The legal rights of my child	37.1%
	How I will be notified about any changes in my child's education or IEP	33.3%
	Classroom placement options	27.2%

Note. Percentages are based on participants that marked item as "Know A lot About".

### Q3. What are the optimal circumstances for parents to learn about special education systems and services?

1. Conversations with school special education teachers (meetings, phone calls).
2. Talking with other parents who have a child in special education.
3. Reading information (pamphlets, handouts, and online documents).
4. Online learning videos (watching short YouTube videos on special education).

*Note.* Items were rated based on mean scores: Very likely to participate (3), Somewhat likely to participate (2) and Not at all likely to participate (1).



## Q4. What are existing barriers to increasing parents' knowledge of special education?

1. Time of day/night the learning opportunity is offered.
2. Never hear about learning opportunities to be able to register.
3. Time required to participate in a learning opportunity.
4. Lack of available childcare to attend learning opportunity.

*Note.* Items were rated according to Mean scores: Not much of a barrier (3), Somewhat a barrier (2), and Definitely a barrier (1).

Project 2: Examining State  
Department of Education  
Resources for Parents



# How do parents build knowledge?



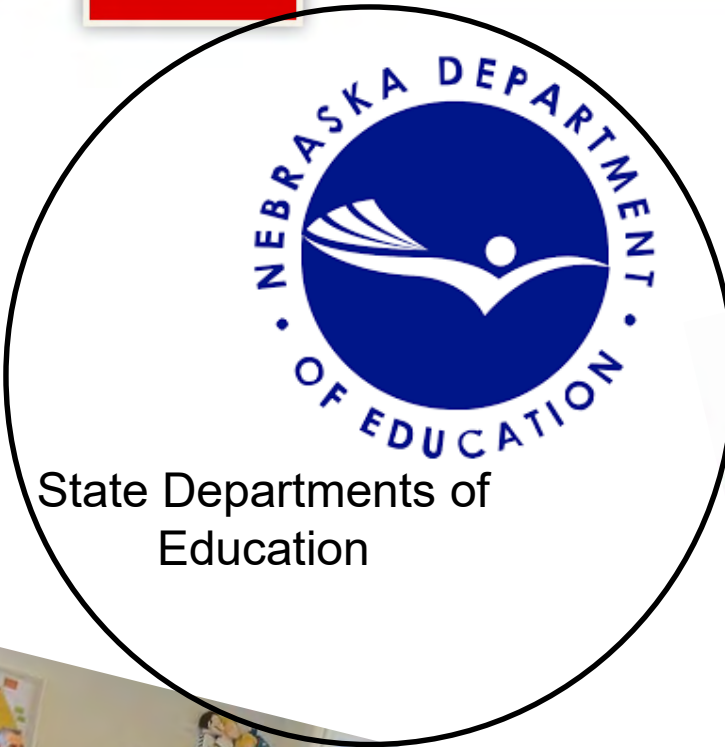
Dispute Resolution Process Comparison			
What are the main features of this option?	<b>AEA Mediation</b> Voluntary process involving AEA paraprofessionals trained in mediation, without attorneys at the outset level.	<b>State Level Mediation</b> No request for hearing. Voluntary process. Neutral state assigned persons called to mediation, less formal than a hearing, legally binding agreement.	<b>Mediation</b> Request for hearing. Voluntary process. Neutral state assigned persons called to mediation, less formal than a hearing, legally binding agreement. Mediators enforce.
Why choose this option?	Resolves issues at outset level with AEA help.	Resolves issues early with state assigned mediator, call is a legally binding agreement.	Resolves issues prior to going to hearing. Mediators enforce. Mediators are often used as a legally binding agreement.
What are the timelines once a process begins?	No specific timeline to complete.	No specific timeline to complete.	30 day resolution period, followed by a 60 day period to complete a hearing and get decision.
Who makes the decision?	Parent and school district both parties must agree to the solution in writing.	Parent and school district, AEA, or mediator. All parties must agree to the solution in writing. Decisions are legally binding.	Parent and school district, AEA, or mediator. All parties must agree to the solution in writing. Decisions are legally binding.
If I disagree with the outcome, what else can I do?	Request a mediation, request a hearing or file a complaint.	Request a hearing (mediation included) or file a complaint.	Go to hearing. Appeal the decision in state or federal court.

School Resources

## Navigating the Course: Finding Your Way through Indiana's Special Education Rules



A Companion Guide to:  
**ARTICLE 7**



State Departments of  
Education

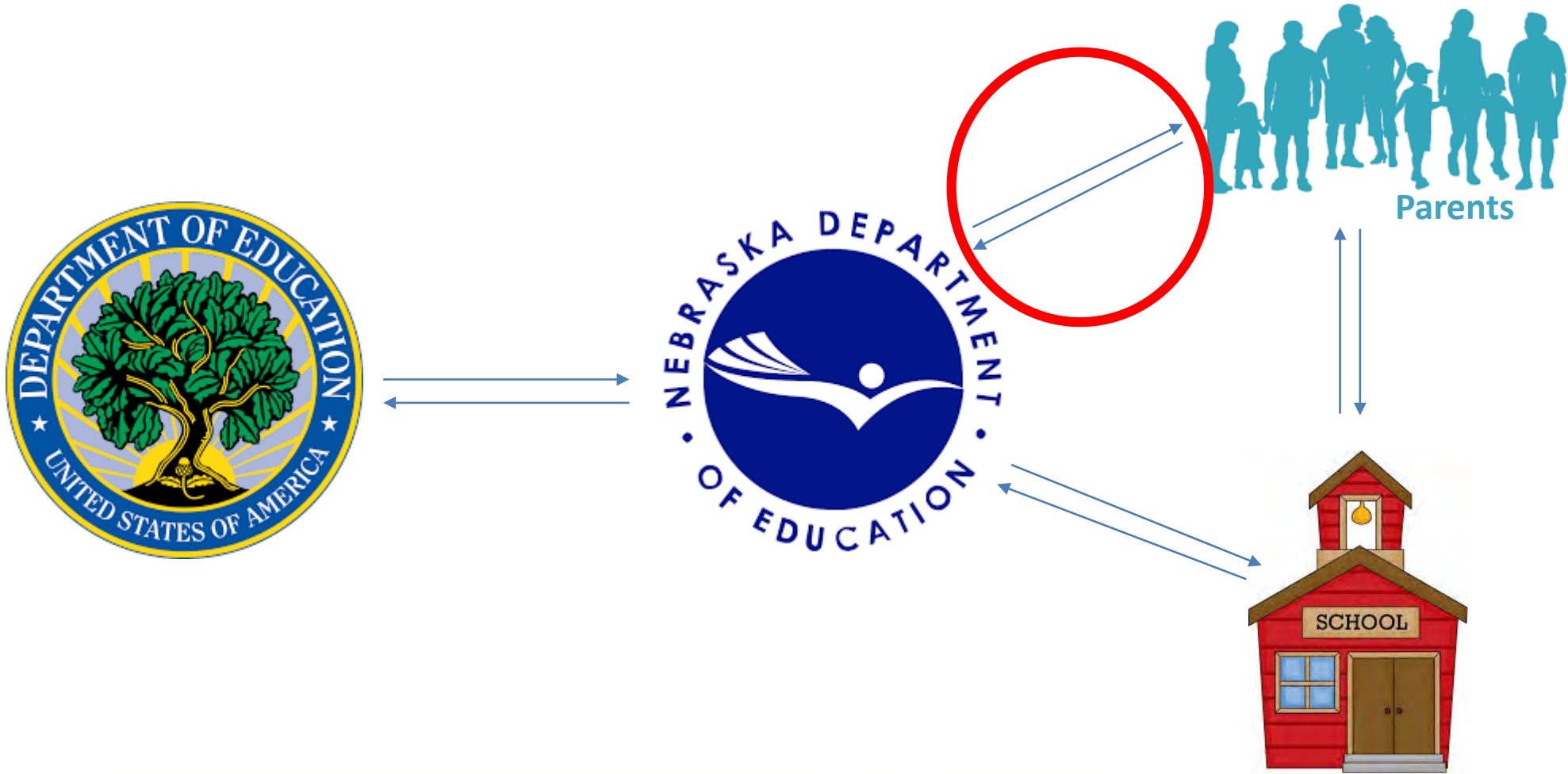


Web-based  
Resources

Social Networks &  
Advocacy Groups



# The Role of SDEs





1. What information do State Department of Education (SDE) websites provide to parents regarding special education?

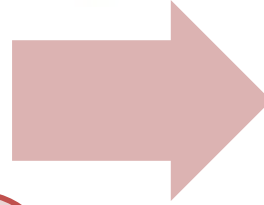
2. In what manner (i.e., delivery method, language) do states provide this information to parents?



Comprehensive Review of 51 State Department of Education Websites

## Phase 1: Search Scope and Resource Inclusion

- Standard 14-step process for reviewing websites
- Resources included:
  - Specific to Special Education and IDEA Part B
  - Applicable to Parents
  - Part of the SDE website



## Phase 2: Coding Resources

- Coding of resources identified
- Recorded 22 variables



## **Research Question 1:**

**What information do State Department of Education (SDE) websites provide to parents regarding special education?**

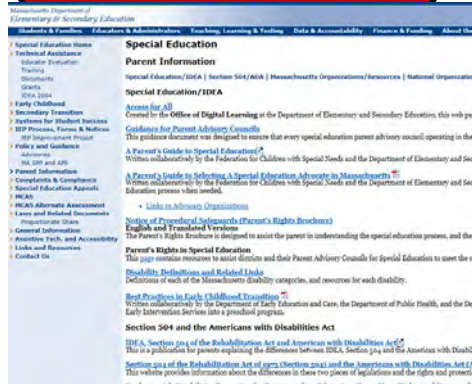
# Resources Provided



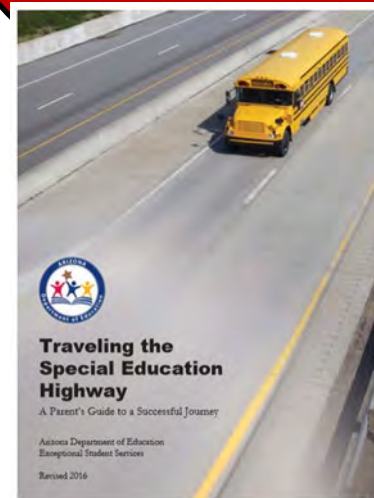
Parent Page  
➤ 34 states



Resources  
➤ 714 total  
➤ Avg. 14 per state



Topics  
➤ 348 resources on multiple topics



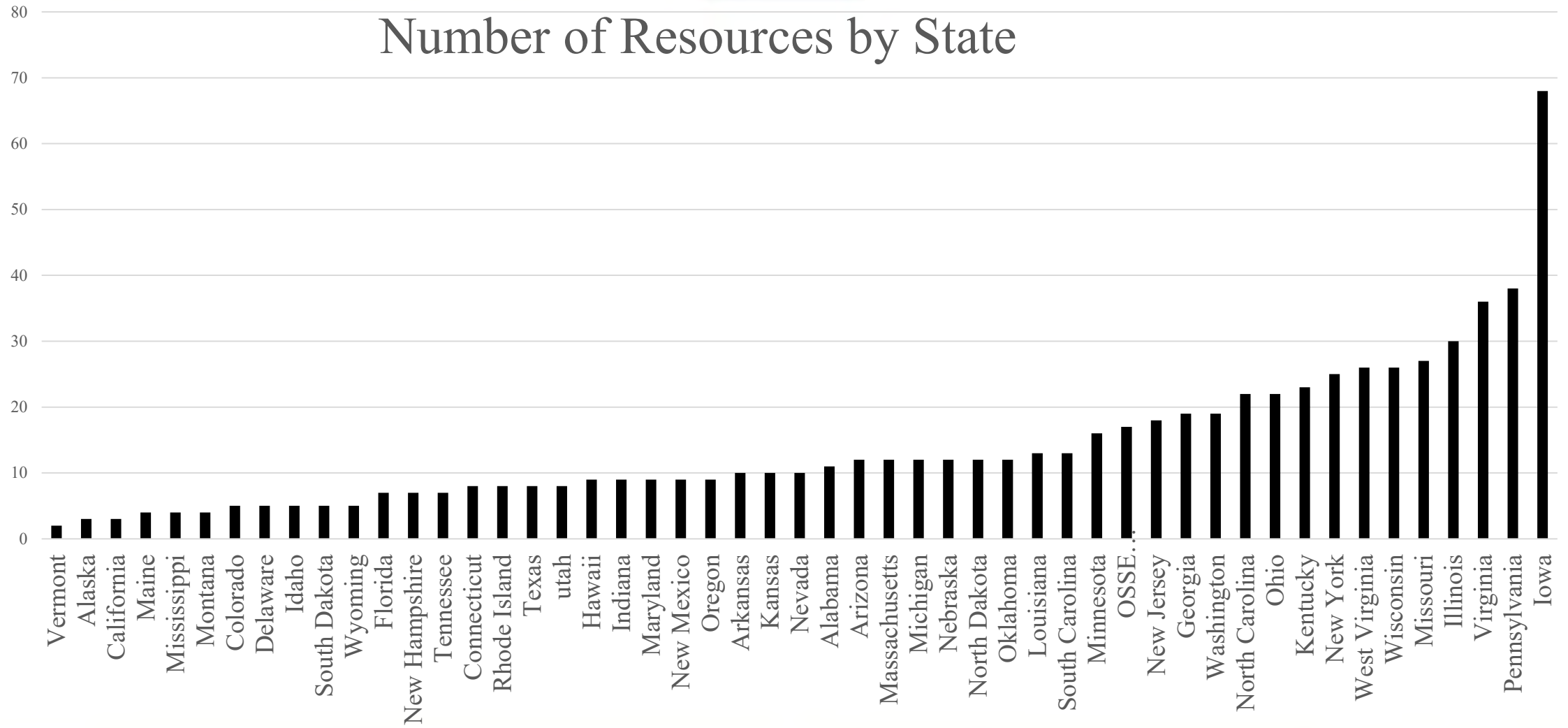
Dispute Resolution  
➤ 216 resources





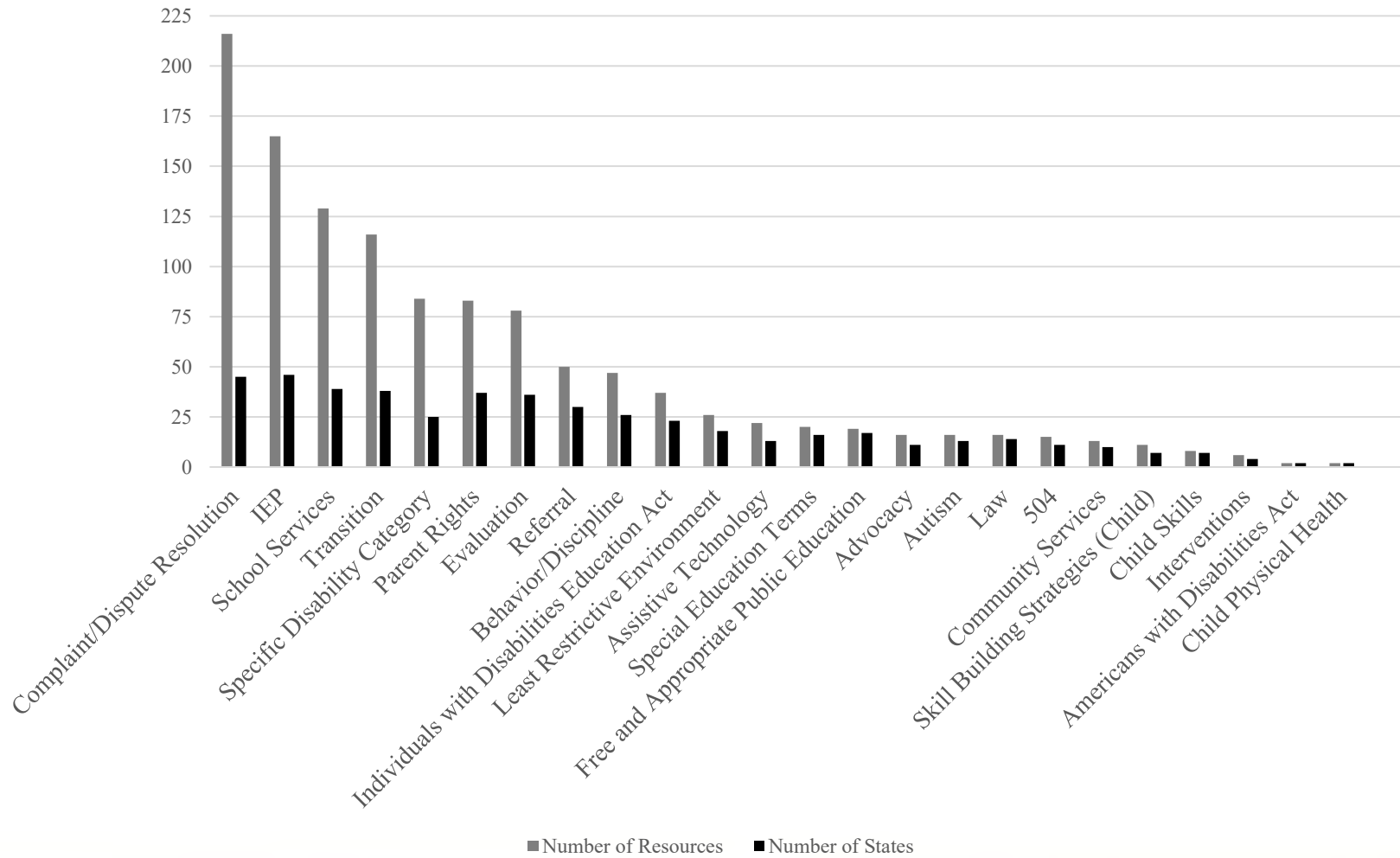


# Number of Resources by State



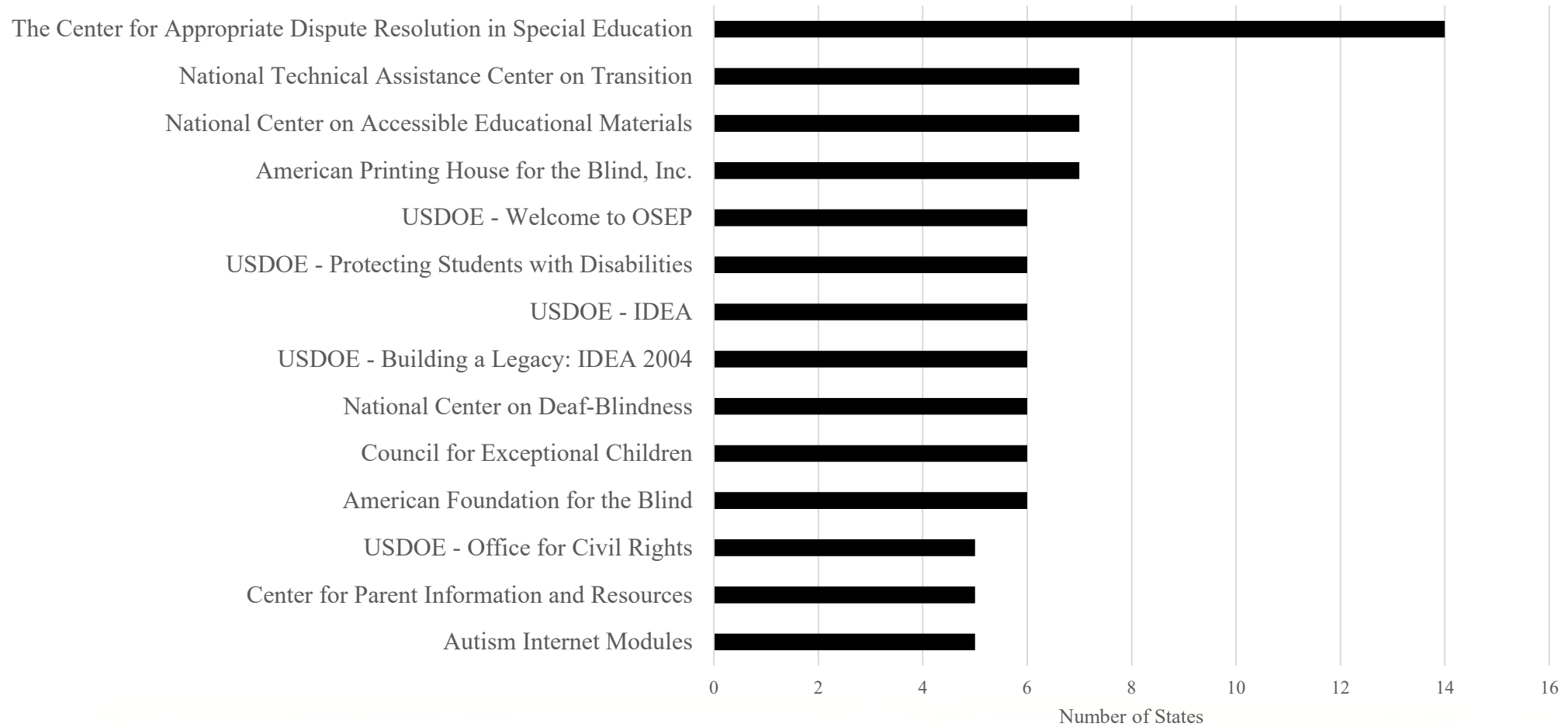


Number of Resources and States Providing Resources by Topic





### External Resources Referenced by Multiple States





## **Research Question 2:**

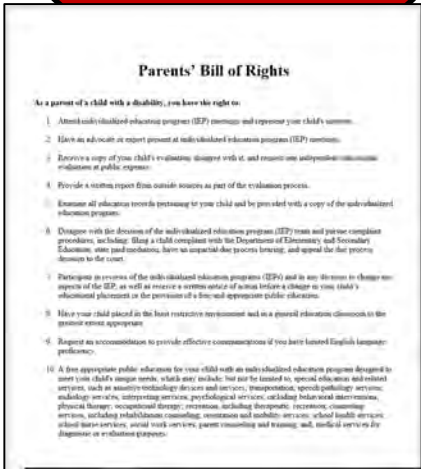
**In what manner (i.e., delivery method, language) do states provide this information to parents?**

# Resource Formats



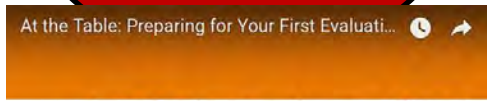
Print (n=656)

- 66% Print
- 25% Website text



Video (n=54)

- 8% of resources
- Provided by 21 states



At the Table:  
Preparing for Your First  
Evaluation Planning Meeting for  
Your Child

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In person (n=10)

- 1% of resources
- Conferences and Camps



Audio (n=3)

- 0.4% of resources
- Provided by 1 state



Language

- 89.5% of resources in English
- Other: Avg. 2.4 per state



Derechos de los padres y sus hijos  
en la educación especial

Aviso de garantías de procedimiento

Una explicación de las Garantías de procedimiento disponibles  
bajo las estipulaciones del Acta para la Educación de los Individuos  
con Discapacidades (IDEA)

y  
los Reglamentos de Colorado para la Administración del Acta Educativa  
para los Niños con Discapacidades (ECEA)

El Acta para la Educación de los Individuos con Discapacidades (IDEA), la ley Federal concerniente  
con la educación de los estudiantes con discapacidades, requiere que las escuelas ofrezcan a los pa-  
dres de un niño con una discapacidad un aviso que contenga una explicación completa de los ga-





- Results represent a snapshot of SDE websites
- Quality of information not measured
- Limited information was collected on external resources provided
- Additional research is needed to understand how resources support parent knowledge



# Conclusions



## Project 1

- ✓ Special Education Teachers are perceived to be a primary resource for parents to improve knowledge on special education.
- ✓ Parents have varied perspectives on the type of information provided to parents by the schools.
- ✓ Parents feel more knowledgeable about processes involved with special education and less knowledgeable on legal aspects.
- ✓ Parents like to receive information to improve knowledge on special education in various modes.
- ✓ Learning opportunities that are varied in time and delivery mode will reduce parent identified barriers to improving knowledge on special education.

## Project 2

- ✓ Hundreds of resources exist
- ✓ High percentage of resources focused on dispute resolution and IEPs
- ✓ SDEs frequently use external resources
- ✓ Nearly all resources are available in print-based format
- ✓ Resources are provided predominantly in English



Action Step: Consider where you obtain your knowledge on special education. How do you share this with parents?

Parents identify **“Conversations with Teachers”** as the **primary** and one of the **preferred** methods of getting information about special education.





# Action Step: Offer Various Methods of Information to Parents to Increase Knowledge of Special Education

Internet Resources

Parent Training

Social Networks

Parent Section of Website

Support and Advocacy Groups

State Dept. of Edu.

Multiple Languages

Conversations with Teachers

Video Resources



# Action Step: Have You Connected Parents to Others who Have Similar Experiences?

- Parent Training and Information Centers
- Community Parent Resource Centers
- Support Groups
- Parent Connectors



# Action Step

## Identify the content that is most important for parents

- ✓ What information is most important?
- ✓ How does this information support all parents?
- ✓ In what sequence should information be provided?





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**DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION  
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*Academy for Child and Family Well Being*

A few announcements from the  
MSLBD Planning Committee...

Join the MSLBD mailing list to get a link  
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directly to you!



**RETHINKING  
Behavior**  
A magazine for professionals  
serving children and youth  
with behavioral needs.

Symposium hashtags:  
**#MSLBD**  
**#RethinkingBehavior**



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MSLBD Party and  
Annual Lip Sync Battle  
**Friday night 8 – 11 pm**  
**Atlanta Ballroom**  
Bring your FREE drink  
ticket and your sweet  
dance moves!



## SAVE THE DATE!

Second Annual Richard L. Simpson Conference on Autism

October 10-11, 2019

KU Edwards Campus | Overland Park, Kansas

*Registration opens April 25, 2018*



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