Guidebook for
Virginia
Parent Resource Centers

A joint project of the
Virginia Department of Education
and the
Center for Family Involvement
Partnership for People with Disabilities at
Virginia Commonwealth University

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Acknowledgements:

We wish to recognize the many people who contributed to the development of this Guidebook, and to the people who have, year after year, maintained a commitment to the work of Parent Resource Centers (PRCs) in Virginia. The first PRCs in Virginia were opened in the 1970s. Many of the individuals who attended the original training and organized the first PRCs in Virginia public school divisions are still at work, committed to the concept of building positive futures for Virginia’s children through working collaboratively with families, schools and communities to improve opportunities for success in education, school and community life.

We must give special recognition to Virginia’s Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC). PEATC worked in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education to develop and hold the first Parent Resource Center trainings in Virginia. PEATC continues to work collaboratively with families, schools and communities to improve education and success for Virginia’s children ([www.peatc.org](http://www.peatc.org)).

In this Guidebook, if a source is not indicated, the information has been adapted from Virginia Resource Center Project, 1997, PEATC.

We extend special thanks to Judy Hudgins and Linda McKelvy-Chik who came to the Virginia Department of Education in 1988 with a commitment to make partnerships between parents and educators work.
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Resources for Use with the Guidebook for Parent Resource Centers

- I’m Determined CD and materials ............ [www.imdetermined.org]
- Working Together .......................... [www.pacer.org]
- Effective Advocacy .......................... [www.pacer.org]
- The Time is Now (Diversity Inclusion) ......... [www.pacer.org]
- Full Life Ahead ................................ [www.FullLifeAhead.org]
- 176 Ways to Involve Parents ................. [www.CorwinPress.com]
- Beyond the Bake Sale ........................ [www.thenewpress.com]
- Negotiating the Special Ed Maze ............. [www.woodbinehouse.com]
- Disability Awareness: A Primer on People First Language .......................... [www.vcu.edu/partnership/C-SAL/downloadables/PDF/APrimeronPeopleFirstLanguage.pdf]
- People First Language ...................... [www.disabilityisnatural.com]
- Parent Primer on Special Education Acronyms, Abbreviations, and Definitions ...................... [www.centerforfamilyinvolvement.org]
- Acronym List ................................ [www.nectac.org/portal/acronyms.asp]
- Sample Parent Resource Center forms ........ [www.vaprcs.org]
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Section 1: History of Parent Resource Centers In Virginia

When Public Law 94-142 was passed by Congress in 1975, one of the requirements was that parents and educators would work together as a team to develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each eligible student with an identified disability. Little guidance, however, was provided for how these new partnerships could be successful.

In 1970 in Alexandria, Virginia, the Chitwood family approached Winifred Anderson at a local church preschool and asked if her staff would be able to provide an educational program for their son Danny, a young man with multiple physical and cognitive disabilities. When she agreed to try, the process of working together as parents and educators to develop an appropriate educational program for Danny laid the foundation for the eventual establishment of the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC).

PEATC knew that parents and educators needed equal access to information and training. The concept of Parent Resource Centers was born. By 1984, PEATC and the Virginia and West Virginia Departments of Education embarked on a cooperative project to initiate a model program to train parents and educators in the skills needed to create and implement effective working relationships. Richmond and Hampton cities established the first local Parent Resource Centers (PRCs) in Virginia as a result of the training provided by the staff at PEATC.

This revised training manual is based in part on that initial training program.

In May 1988, the Virginia Board of Education set a goal to expand the network of PRCs statewide. Not only did the Board and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) earmark funds to assist school divisions with start-up costs, they also established positions at the Department for a parent of a child with a disability and a special educator who would model the parent-professional partnership.

The network of PRCs in Virginia continues to grow with support from the VDOE and school divisions. VDOE also supports and encourages a broad network of parent initiatives, to make sure that parents across Virginia have access to support and training.

This revised PRC training manual is designed to guide the establishment and maintenance of local resource centers. Parents, educators, and students throughout Virginia can be grateful to the many dedicated PRC staff members who maintain a commitment to the vision of parents and educators working together for students.
Section 2: Profile of a Parent Resource Center

School divisions in Virginia operate PRCs. Some are open to all families while others serve parents and guardians of children receiving special education services. These PRCs offer training, information, and assistance, free of charge.

Types of Services Parent Resource Centers Offer

Because they are operated by school divisions, Virginia's PRCs vary in the types of services they offer. PRCs typically provide:

- Direct assistance to parents/guardians: listening, problem-solving, providing resources
- Information sessions for parents, school staff, and community promoting parent/professional partnerships.

Each PRC determines additional services to offer based upon the needs of parents and the services available in the community. These additional services may include:

- Providing initial contact with parents when their child is identified as needing special education services
- Organizing and/or facilitating parent-to-parent support groups
- Publishing a newsletter
- Establishing a lending library
- Serving on an interagency committee or council
- Conducting special education training
- Providing training sessions to enhance parenting skills
- Maintaining a Web site

PRC staff members serve as advocates for the child, working with parents. They may not serve as advocates for parents in formal mediation, complaints, or due process proceedings. In this situation, referral to local or state advocacy organizations is appropriate. Due to the time commitment, school divisions, often referred to as Local Education Agencies (LEAs), will determine policy regarding PRC staff involvement in special education Eligibility, Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and other formal and informal school meetings.
Steps to Starting a Parent Resource Center

PRCs are designed to model a partnership between educators and parents by employing an educator coordinator and a parent coordinator to work together in carrying out the duties of the PRC. Typically the school division secures funding, identifies staff who have skills in working with parents and educators, and involve these staff members in organizing and establishing a new PRC. Some preparation must be accomplished beforehand to mobilize support from individuals, the school division, and the community for starting and maintaining a center.

Those interested in creating a PRC should:

1. Review procedures regarding the establishment of centers available from the VDOE and visit existing centers.
2. Obtain administrative approval from the Director of Special Education, the Superintendent, and the local school board.
3. Determine funding sources and begin drafting a budget.
4. Garner support from the community, including the local Special Education Advisory Committee and other groups and individuals.
5. Notify the VDOE concerning the intent to create a PRC and complete the required application form to request initial financial assistance for two years. The initial funding from VDOE is provided to the school division in the form of a sub-grant award from Federal funds.
6. Select a parent of a child with disabilities and a special educator to form the core staff of the center.
7. Have the parent-educator team complete initial training by a parent-educator team supported by the VDOE and established PRCs throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.
8. Formulate a PRC Master Plan that includes:
   - Overview of the PRC
   - Operating and management goals and objectives
   - Timeline
   - Staffing
   - Budget
Section 3: Establishing A Parent Resource Center Master Plan

The PRC Master Plan serves as a guide for the center's activities. Like a business plan, the PRC Master Plan identifies the major operating and management procedures, goals and objectives to be accomplished in achieving the mission of the PRC. It also specifies operating procedures and calendar dates for accomplishing work as outlined; staffing for the center; the qualifications, skills and knowledge staff should possess; and information about establishing the center's budget. This Master Plan serves as a framework for the PRC. It should be revisited often to ensure that what is intended is being accomplished, and whenever reorganization is needed.

(See Appendices, Sample Master Plan for Parent Resource Center, pgs. 29-30)

Master Plan Part 1 – Overview of the PRC

This section provides information to persons in the community regarding:

- Location of the PRC
- Center phone number
- Geographic area served
- General services the PRC provides
- Population the PRC serves
- The mission of the PRC (See Appendices, Sample Mission Statements, pg. 33)
- Name of the organizations providing financial support
- Other identifying or relevant information

Master Plan Part 2 – Operating and Management Goals/ Objectives

(See Appendices, Master Plan for Parent Resource Center pgs. 31-32)
Goals reflect general end results to be achieved, such as establishing the PRC, or coordinating community resource information for parents. Objectives refer to specific and concrete steps toward achieving the goals.

Master Plan Part 3 – Timeline

The Timeline establishes the dates during which PRC staff will work toward achieving established objectives.
Master Plan Part 4 – Parent Resource Center Staff
This section should describe the number of staff employed by the PRC, the time commitment (full-time, half-time, etc.), job descriptions of staff, and content knowledge or training required for PRC staff.
(See Appendices, Sample Job Descriptions, pgs. 35-36)

Master Plan Part 5 – Budget
This section establishes the budget for the Center. Typically, the major expense will be salaries. As you develop the action plans for achieving Center objectives, carefully consider the budget items of equipment, supplies, travel and other items needed to accomplish these objectives.
Section 4: Managing the Parent Resource Center

The work of the PRC staff may be divided into two categories: operating work and management work. Operating work are services provided to parents, school staff, and the community. These services may include providing training sessions, finding existing community resources, and building partnerships within and among the schools and community constituencies. Management work refers to the work that must be accomplished to deliver services, such as planning, organizing, staffing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting, and evaluating.

Identifying Staff Members’ Experiences, Strengths, And Challenges

As a first step, PRC staff members should do a self-inventory of their own experiences, strengths, and challenges to identify who is best suited to handle each specific role or activity. In identifying past experiences, strengths, and challenges, PRC staff members learn about themselves and each other, identify areas for skill building, and determine needed resources. Your past experiences with working, volunteering, running a household, etc. – and the strengths and challenges you have identified in yourself through these experiences – help define your role as a PRC staff member. With some tasks, you will feel you can “hit the ground running,” while with others you may feel a need for skill building. Knowing those different areas in advance will help the PRC operate effectively.

Examples of past experiences:
- Volunteer work – team organizer, leader within a club or civic organization, presentation speaker
- Employment – bookkeeper, trainer, social worker, caregiver

Examples of strengths:
- Communicates clearly
- Exhibits leadership ability
- Motivates others
- Works effectively on a team

Examples of challenges:
- Uncomfortable speaking to groups
- Lacks computer skills

A PRC Coordinator self-assessment may include:
(See Appendices for Staff Profile, pg. 37)
The Parent/Professional Partnership

Partnership is a key component to a successful PRC. It includes the PRC staff, parents, school staff, and the community. Partnerships allow relationships to be developed, needs to be revealed and supports and resources to be shared.

Definition
Partnership is a relationship between two people in which each has equal status and certain independence, but also some obligation to each other.

The key words imply:
- Equal in value and status. Partnerships require sharing knowledge for the good of the child.
- Independence in regard to each partner bringing viewpoints and contributions for cooperative decision making.
- Obligation or responsibility to work together for the child’s education. Partnerships are based on mutual respect and a shared concern for the welfare of the child.

For Teachers
To have the opportunity to work with parents, to attend workshops with them, and to get to know them is very important. As with any relationship the parent/teacher partnership requires ongoing communication and shared dedication to educating the child.

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“Working Together Works”

Working together can never be a policy.
It can only be an idea.
It can never be a code of rules.
It can only be a way of looking at the world.
We can say, “This is mine,” and be good, or we Can add, “This is ours” and become better.
We can think, “I do my share,” and be satisfied, Or we can ask, “Can I do more?” And become prosperous.

We can work alongside each other and grow.
Because when all is said and done,
Working together doesn’t only bring out the best in all of us,
It brings out the best in each of us.

STREAM 1996, Suzanne Creasey and Pat Popp
Characteristics of An Effective Team

1. 

   **Effective teams include all group members in discussions and decisions.**
   
   **Participation:** Discussions are lively and each member of the team has a chance to participate.
   
   **Listening:** Team members listen to each other. They summarize, paraphrase, or ask questions to encourage explanation or elaboration.
   
   **Consensus decisions:** The team arrives at its decisions through discussion of each member’s ideas. Team members avoid both formal voting and easy compromises.
   
   **Self-assessment:** The team does periodic self-examinations. Each member of the team evaluates how effectively the team is functioning and recommends how it might improve.

2. 

   **Effective teams use disagreement productively.**
   
   **Open communication:** Team members tell each other how they feel about the team’s project and the team’s operations. They have no secrets or ulterior motives.
   
   **Civilized disagreement:** Team members feel comfortable disagreeing with each other. Disagreements are polite and friendly.

3. 

   **Effective teams share common goals and approaches.**
   
   **Clear purpose:** Each member of the team understands the mission or objective. The team has a plan of action.
   
   **External relations:** The team develops a working relationship with the supervisor and with other teams. It displays to those outside the team a distinct identity.

4. 

   **Effective teams divide the workload fairly.**
   
   **Clear work assignments:** Each member of the team understands the job that he or she is expected to do. Work assignments are fairly distributed and promptly completed.
   
   **Diverse responsibilities:** Each member of the team may have a special emphasis or roles may rotate among group members. Either way, the team members make sure that all roles are filled.

Effective Problem Solving

Successful problem solving leaves all parties feeling that they have been heard and treated respectfully. The discussion is focused on the problem and resolution is reached without attacking or demeaning.

Make an appointment with the person involved.
Calmly tell them you have a concern and want to discuss it to see how you can work on it together. By saying you want to work together, you are showing a willingness to listen and find a solution.

Try to avoid building defensiveness on either side.
When people are defensive, it is more difficult for them to listen with an open mind. While the other person is talking, we tend to concentrate on what we are going to say next or how we can justify our actions. Attacking often adds to the problem and can become the focus more than the original issue. When trying to solve problems, listening is as important as talking.

It’s okay to be nervous.
If you are nervous about the meeting, make notes of the key points you want to cover and go through your list during the meeting.

Build in some positives.
It is helpful to acknowledge what is going well, not just the specific problem.

Use "I" statements.
Use "I" statements rather than “you” (which can be perceived as accusatory).

Stay focused.
Keep the focus of your concern or disagreement on the action/decision. Criticizing the person does not address the problem and creates more tension, which may then become a bigger problem than the original issue.

Be aware of possible barriers.
Think about the various barriers to solving the problem. Flexibility is an important key to problem solving.

Be sure to follow up.
Finish the meeting with a summary of the discussion and conclusions. This assures that everyone understood the results of the meeting in the same way.
Problem Solving Process

Reframe the problem:
• Identify the problem.
• State the problem. (“Parents will not come to the training.”)
• Reframe by making a positive statement. (“We need to try new ways to recruit parents to attend training.”)

Find facts:
• What are the facts?
• What are the challenges?
• What are the opportunities?
• Draw a picture if the situation is complex or to help clarify for everyone.

Brainstorm for ideas:
• What are all possible and seemingly impossible ideas? (Be creative.)
• Record all ideas.
• Avoid criticizing or evaluating any ideas.
• Use your imagination; don’t address limitations.
• Do not discuss ideas.
• Piggy-back ideas.
• Mix and match ideas.
• List as many ideas as possible; quantity is desired.

Screen possible solutions:
• What ideas will work?
• Are they in the best interest of parties involved?
• Do they follow principle of collaboration?
• Are they do-able?
• Are they financially possible?

Select ideas for action and develop a plan:
• How do we do it?
• What actions are necessary?
• Who will be responsible?
• What will be the timeline?
• When will the plan be reviewed?

Managing Conflict in Team Situations

Before the conflict develops:
• Cultivate mutual trust and respect among team members.
• Use effective problem solving and communication skills.
• Anticipate others’ needs, interests, and positions.
• Learn conflict management skills.
When conflict happens:
• Schedule a convenient time to discuss the conflict.
• Schedule an appropriate place to meet, and ensure sufficient time.
• Separate the person from the problem.

In conflict situations use RESOLVE:
R espond first to the other person’s feelings.
E mploy Body Basics (e.g., eye contact, body language, behaviors, breathing, facial expressions, vocal tone).
S tay focused on finding an appropriate solution – don’t get sidetracked by other issues.
O rganize your thoughts before the meeting.
L isten responsively (e.g., reflecting, clarifying) to understand the other person’s position.
V iew conflict management as opportunities to increase team skills.
E nd the discussion on a positive note. Thank the person(s) for his/her willingness to work with you to resolve the conflict.

After the conflict is resolved:
• Self-evaluate your behavior during the session.
• Follow through on commitments that you made during the conflict resolution session.

Communication: What Is It?
Communication is the exchange of information and understanding from one person to another. This exchange can be in the form of verbal, paraverbal or nonverbal communication.

Methods of Communication
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type:</th>
<th>Percentage of Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal (words)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraverbal (tone, volume)</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal (body language)</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Communication is a learned skill. Most people are born with the physical ability to talk, but we must learn to speak well and communicate effectively. Speaking, listening, and our ability to understand verbal and nonverbal meanings are skills we develop in various ways. We learn basic communication skills by observing other people and modeling their behaviors. We also gain communication skills through education and practice.
Types of Communicators

1. **Passive**
   - Introvert
   - Might feel powerless
   - Quiet communicator

2. **Aggressive**
   - In-your-face attitude
   - Loud
   - Less likely to listen to ideas of others

3. **Assertive**
   - Share what they know clearly
   - Acknowledge the expertise of others
   - Willing to work with others

Communication Tips

1. **Maintain a calm, reassuring voice**

2. **Ask the speaker to repeat**
   (e.g., “I’m sorry I didn’t catch that, would you please repeat that.”)
   This technique:
   - Gives you time to think and plan
   - Shows concern and support
   - Starts a conversation
   - Clarifies the problem
   - Allows the speaker to rephrase his statement

3. **Ask questions (who, what, where, when, why, and how)**
   This technique:
   - Gives you time
   - Diverts his/her attention to talk about something that may interest them or the problem
   - Shows your concern
   - Gets a conversation moving
   - Reduces anxiety

4. **Repeat what the speaker has said**
   (also called playback e.g., “Joe, if I hear you correctly, what you said is … .”)
   This technique:
   - Gives you time
   - Shows you are listening
   - Shows concern
   - Gets a conversation moving

5. **Re-direct anger to the past**
   (e.g., “You were angry with him because …”)
   This technique: Diverts the speaker to think of his anger as having occurred in the past.

6. **Interrupt by using the name of the speaker**
   (e.g., “Excuse me Joe …”)
   This technique:
• Recognizes the single most important word in
  the dictionary is the speaker’s name
• When you use his/her name, you put them at
  your level

7. Use “we” meaning together not as an order
   (e.g., “Why don’t we ... ?”)
   This technique:
   • Puts you at the same level as the speaker
   • Reduces anxiety

8. Get them to sit down with you
   This technique:
   • Relaxes numerous muscles and reduces anxiety
   • Encourages conversation

9. Get them to walk with you
   (e.g., “Why don’t we walk over to the__ and __?”)
   This technique:
   • Reduces anxiety and expends energy
   • Removes them from the source of anger
   • Removes him/her from an audience

10. Use pacing techniques: sensory, visual, and
    auditory
    (e.g., “I feel or I sense that ... ”; “I can see that
        you’re upset with ... ”; “I hear you or I understand
        exactly what you are saying.”)

11. Use “I” statements
    (e.g., “I feel ... , when you ... , because ... ”)

Verbal Communications

Invitations to communication:
• “Tell me about it.”
• “I’d like more information about that.”
• “I’d be interested in what you think.”
• “What else do we need to make this
  successful?”
• “Let’s discuss it.”
• “I don’t clearly understand. Could you put it
  another way?”
• “What does this mean?”
• “This seems important to you.”
• “Tell me the whole story.”

These kinds of responses say:
• I respect you as a person.
• I might learn something from you.
• I really want to hear more.
• Your ideas are worth listening to.
• I care for your opinion.
• I want a working relationship with you.
• I want the best program for the child.

Effective listening involves:
• Being silent - listening through an entire
  explanation.
• Using words that convey acceptance of the
  individual and respect for his/her thoughts.
• Creating a warm atmosphere for talk.
• Relaxing.
• Trying to identify the feelings behind the words.
• Showing a range of possibilities and other points of view.
• Making positive comments.
• Being satisfied with increased understanding and awareness.

Listening Skills and Techniques

Listed below are several skills and techniques that have been found useful in effective listening. Some you may use quite naturally and others will require practice.

Minimal encouragers on the phone
“Uh-huh.” “Mmm…”

Nonverbal gestures in person
Eye contact, nodding, leaning forward, etc. These invite the person to express him/herself; at the same time, they demonstrate that you are hearing what is being said, and that you accept it.

Informing
Informing is giving the person needed information. It may be a simple referral or something more extensive. Pacing how quickly the information is given calls for a conscious judgment. If the information or referral is complex, is an in-person meeting required?

Listen for how fast the person speaks to pace yourself.

Silence
By being silent we allow the person to process new information and/or feelings without pressure. Be sensitive to the person’s need for silence—do not thrust into conversation. If you are silent because you are confused or do not know what to say, let the person know.

Reflection and paraphrasing
Reflection involves uniting statements, tone and underlying expressions into a feeling statement trying to capture the essence of what the person is experiencing. Paraphrasing refers to the restatement of feelings and thoughts, perhaps using slightly different words than the other person. By both methods, the listener serves as a mirror for the person, providing a sounding board for thoughts and feelings. This gives the person the opportunity to view him or herself as an observer, and to test the validity of the experience.

Open-ended questions
“How do you feel about it?” “What have you tried so far?” “How would you like it to be?” “What if that doesn’t work?” Open-ended questions invite and encourage the
person to give more information. They do not force a choice between options or create defensiveness. Because they cannot be answered by a "yes" or "no", open-ended questions help the person explore thoughts and feelings.

Summarizing
In summarizing you gather feelings and facts that the person has previously expressed and feed them back in an organized fashion. Summarizing is useful when the person introduced many topics and is having difficulty focusing on one, when there is an extended silence in the conversations, and when closure is needed at the end of a call.

I-statement
"I'm overwhelmed at all you're telling me. How can we sort this out?" These statements express to the person how you feel in a non-threatening way. Use them sparingly because excessive use shifts the focus of the call to you. I-statements can be useful when the person is confusing and listener needs clarification, and when the person is manipulating the listener in some fashion.

Final thoughts
At first, listeners may feel uncomfortable or self-conscious using these listening techniques. They are not the usual approaches we use in everyday conversation. These approaches do work and help people feel heard, understood, and accepted. These practices become easier with practice. Relax and be natural.

Structuring Interviews
When talking with parents, PRC staff will want to obtain a clear understanding of parents' questions and concerns. When contacting community agency people, staff will need to gather accurate information about the services offered by the agency. Additionally, staff will want to inform the public about the PRCs programs and activities. In both instances there are several types of interviewing statements that can be used to achieve these purposes.

Types of interviewing statements are:

Structuring statements
Specify the main topics to be discussed during a given phase of the interview. They are usually used to begin the discussion and can be in question form.

Examples:
1. “Tell me about your child's current classroom placement.”
2. “Let me describe the activities of the PRC.”
Defining statements
Obtain a clear definition of the situation and a clear statement of desired outcomes.
Examples:
1. “You’ve said you are dissatisfied with the proposed placement for your child. Specifically, can you tell me what you disagree with?”
2. “Are your services available only for individuals 16 and older?”

Summarizing statements
Recount the content of what has been previously discussed. This is useful for checking whether or not the caller and staff member agree on what has been communicated.
Examples:
1. “Let me make sure I understand what you just told me. You want to remove your child from the special education program, and the school disagrees with your position.”
2. “Your job training program is for individuals 16 and older, and you currently have one opening.”

Informative Statements
Convey factual information.
Examples:
1. “The IEP is to be developed within 30 days of determination of eligibility.”
2. “The PRC will be conducting a workshop on October 3, from 7-9 p.m.”

Validating Statements
Are designed to determine if there is agreement on a specific point, such as problem definition, time frame, fees, etc.
Examples:
1. “Yes, the school system is sponsoring the workshop, and as I said, the workshop is free to parents.”
2. “I’ll send you a schedule of our workshop by next Wednesday, and you will see that it is included in your next newsletter.”

Reinforcing statements
Project interest in what the other person is saying and encourage the person to continue sharing information.
Examples:
1. “All of those meetings are confusing, but perhaps we can figure out what steps to take next.”
2. “Your agency performs a needed and valuable service for the community.”
3. “Uh-huh.”
Specific Techniques For Terminating Calls

• State listener need with an “I-statement” (“I can speak with you for five more minutes and then I have a meeting to attend. Let’s schedule an appointment for us to meet.”)

• Closing statements/questions (“We have discussed a lot. Why don’t you take some time to think about it? Let’s talk again. When is a good time?”)

• Summarize the call and repeat what the listener will do. (“I’ll get the information on respite services and call tomorrow. Is that ok?”)

• Set a time limit and stick with it.

Roadblocks to Effective Communications

Everyone has his/her own style of talking that proves effective in certain situations. To help parents improve their advocacy skills, think of another way to respond or reframe the response to enhance communication. Some styles of responding may lead to roadblocks when helping a parent solve a problem, such as:

Directing, ordering: “You must ... You have to ... or You will...”
Possible results:
• Denies the parent room to think for him or herself
• Makes the parent feel resentful, defensive or dependent
How could you reframe this?

Warning, threatening, admonishing: “You had better...If you don’t, then ...”
Possible results:
• Implies that you know the consequences; gives you undue power, authority
• Results in resistance, fear or dependence
How could you reframe this?

Persuading with logic, arguing, instructing, lecturing: “Do you realize.. Here is why you are wrong...Let me tell you why ...”
Possible results:
• Makes the parent feel inferior, “put-down”
• Parent may counter arguments and defend his or her position more strongly
How could you reframe this?
Advising, recommending, providing answers, or solutions: “What I would do is ... Why don’t you ... It would be best for you to ...”
Possible results:
- Assumes that you have all necessary information about the parent's situation
- Assumes that you are qualified to advise
- Leads to arguments and “yes, but ...” reactions
How could you reframe this?

Reassuring, excusing, sympathizing, minimizing: “It’s not so bad ... You'll feel better ...”
Possible results:
- Denies validity of parent's emotion; it may be that bad, and it may not get better
- Cuts off the parent's expression of feelings
- Creates parent's disbelief and resentment when you are incorrect
How could you reframe this?

Diagnosing, psychoanalyzing, interpreting: “Your problem is ... What you need is ...”
Possible results:
- Makes you appear all powerful
- Denies the parent's ability to develop own insights

Useful words to reframe or lead to reframing
Alternatives, options, new ways; possible strategies that have worked for others; choices; let's look at the possible outcomes; acknowledge feelings and follow with a question to begin constructive thinking; refocus on the child.

Sample Phone Calls
Practice appropriate responses with your PRC staff. Remember, you are assisting parents and school staff in building partnerships.

1. A parent calls to ask about a particular school into which she may move her child. She asks about special education services in that school. You have received quite a few calls from other parents whose children attend that school. The calls have not been complimentary. Most of the complaints concern problems with teachers not following 504 plans or IEPs.

2. A parent has been told by the Child Study Committee that they will refer the child for an evaluation for special education services. They feel the child should also be evaluated for ADD. She was told to take the child to the
pediatrician for this evaluation. A friend has told her that the school system is responsible for the cost of the evaluation. Why didn’t they tell her?

3. At the IEP meeting I was told my daughter would receive speech twice a week for 30 minutes each session. I disagreed and requested that the services be three times each week. The assistant principal said that they were the professionals and knew what was best for my child. He also said that if I did not sign the IEP my daughter would not receive any services. Is this true?

4. My daughter is a special education student in the 12th grade. I want to file a formal complaint. With whom in the school system do I file the complaint?

5. A principal from one of your schools calls. He states that a parent has come to the school and said that her son is to have a full-time aide. She has apparently attended a workshop at the PRC and the staff said her son could have an aide. She was to tell the principal that she would take him to court and they would make him give her son an aide.

6. I am going to an IEP meeting next week for my daughter and I need an advocate to go with me. My neighbor told me about the PRC. Will one of you attend this meeting with me?

Effective Advocacy/Confidentiality

Eight Strategies Advocates Can Use To Assist Parents

1. **Ensure confidentiality**
   Confidentiality is among an advocate’s primary responsibilities and cannot be stressed enough. Treat everything you hear as private information given to you in trust. Never forget that parents may talk to you about incidents and emotions that they hesitate to discuss even with relatives and friends.

2. **Maintain credibility**
   Your credibility is essential. Always tell callers when you are unsure of the answer to a question and ask if you can call them back after doing some research. It’s important to give accurate information. Be clear with parents about the issues that you can—and cannot—address. If you’re not qualified to respond to a question about respite care, for instance, refer the caller to appropriate sources of information.

3. **Build trust**
   When you need to seek more information on a situation by talking with a third party:
4. **Stay focused**

While it is necessary to be a good listener and provide emotional support to parents who call or visit, keep the focus on the issue at hand. Past events may provide the context to help you understand your caller's issue, but be sure to focus on the issue as it exists today. Together, clarify and define the issues and help parents develop a plan of action. Help parents prioritize issues that are most important to them.

5. **Write it down**

Write down key points of your discussion with each parent. Details are fresh when the conversation has just ended. Several weeks later, details blur. Note the names and phone numbers of the people the parents have given you permission to call. It's possible you'll need to communicate with others to help understand the issue.

6. **Be a connector**

In addition to the help you can offer, be aware of other sources of assistance for families. The need for emotional support is valid, but the time you have available may be limited. Help parents identify resources that will assist them in their search for appropriate services. Encourage them to call back if the resources are not helpful. Even though a parent may call with a question or problem you or your PRC isn't equipped to help solve, serve as a connector to another resource that could be of help. Always ensure that a parent's call to you is productive.

7. **Stay in touch**

Even when further involvement on your part may not be necessary, let the parent know they can call you to let you know how things worked out for them and their child. It's important that families know they've reached someone who cares. Always include a personal note with any material or information you send to families. It establishes a personal connection, and they know whom to call in the future.
8. **Encourage self-sufficiency**

The parents you help are responsible for themselves and their child. Affirm the strength of families. Work together with the expectation that they can and will do things for themselves – attend workshops, read, and meet and talk with other professionals and parents. Your role is to assist parents in becoming effective advocates for their own families, and to share information and strategies that will help them succeed.

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**NOTE:** Although committed to confidentiality, advocates should be aware of Virginia legislation outlining mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect.

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**Maintaining the PRC**

The following are items to consider in day-to-day maintenance of a PRC:

- Are staff meetings scheduled on a weekly or monthly basis to discuss upcoming activities and concerns within the PRC?

- Are the PRC’s hours of operation meeting the needs of your families and staff? Is the staff available for evening appointments? Will the PRC offer hours on Saturday?

- Do families feel welcome when they visit the PRC? Is the PRC’s atmosphere warm and inviting? Is it accessible to everyone? (Consider cultural/language differences and physical challenges.)

- Do you share your information with community agencies, PTA/PTO, Mom’s Club, etc.? Have you considered various marketing ideas?

- Are you validating your services through documentation and data collection?

- Do you use students and other volunteers to assist you at the PRC?

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Guidebook for Virginia Parent Resource Centers
• Are information sessions offered at different times: mornings, evenings and Saturdays, with certificates provided?

• Are you using a variety of ways to distribute materials – Internet, e-mail, school mail, postal service, school displays? Are you distributing materials to various school staff such as department chairs, counselors and to community agencies?

• Do you have a drop box available for returned materials when the PRC is closed?

• Have you considered offering in-services for school staff and community agencies?

• Have you contacted classroom teachers to offer sessions to students in the areas of learning styles, disability awareness, transition, etc.?

• Do you provide support to the Special Education Advisory Committee? This might include creating a brochure, advertising, hosting meetings, providing refreshments, and assisting with planning.

• Does the PRC staff meet with the Director of Special Services or attend meetings with staff in the building where the PRC is housed?

• Do you encourage the use of PRC for staff meetings such as guidance counselors, special education department or community support groups?

• Do you assist community support groups in their initial development?

• Does your PRC/Library provide DVDs, books, magazines, professional journals, and Web resources on diverse topics? Are multiple copies available of resources in great demand? Is the bibliography kept up-to-date and easily accessible to your patrons? Is it online?

• Are you working with your Director of Special Education to ensure funding to sustain PRC services? Are PRC services promoted with school budget makers? Are grants and community partnerships considered?
Cultural Diversity

For years PRCs have focused attention on meeting the needs of diverse families. As the nation becomes increasingly rich in people from varied backgrounds, races and religions, PRCs face new opportunities and challenges as we plan our services and strategies.

Why should we pay attention to diversity? To begin with, PRCs are charged with reaching all families of children with disabilities with appropriate information and assistance. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, America is becoming an even broader mix of nationalities, races, and religions. By 2025, minorities are expected to make up about 38 percent of America’s population.

Reaching diverse parents presents some interesting challenges for PRCs. Some parents may have a different perspective about what a disability is or about what should be done when a child has a disability. Some will have differences in help-seeking patterns. Others need translated materials. Still others may place a different value on education or on advocacy. Strategies for reaching a broad array of diverse families and having cultural competence in serving them are more critical than ever.

Are we fully prepared to meet the needs of all parents of children with disabilities? What do we need to know to be culturally competent? Defining and achieving consensus on the concept of cultural competence can be the first challenge. For instance, exactly what is diversity? What is culture? What does it mean to be culturally competent?

To assist you as PRC staff in reaching out to all parents in your communities, a copy of The Time is Now: Diversity Inclusion for Parent Centers and Advocates is recommended. This resource can assist your Center as you begin to examine your current goals, mission, objectives, and strategies and adjust them, if necessary, to reflect the needs of today’s families. This resource is available for purchase online at www.taalliance.org/publications/books.asp.

PRCs have a tremendous obligation and a tremendous opportunity to build the future of parent involvement in an expanding universe of diversities, races, and cultures. The future is upon us, and the time is now.

Adapted from The Time Is Now, Diversity Inclusion for Parent Centers and Advocates by Dixie Jordan, ALLIANCE National Technical Assistance Center
Parent Needs Assessment

To provide a sound foundation for the PRC training plans, a survey of parent needs within the community is recommended. This information will provide direction for the parent-professional team, but will also document the need for the PRC.

**Major points to consider:**

- The process of conducting the needs assessment should be adapted to your community following consultation with your special education director.

- Needs assessment is an ongoing process. Following the initial survey, documentation of parent needs becomes a part of the Center’s routine procedures.

- Documenting needs of families in the community provides the PRC with data to justify it’s activities.

Needs assessment data, regularly updated, combines with report of activities (monthly and yearly) to send the message to administrators that the PRC is needed and operated in an efficient, effective manner.

*(See Appendices for Checklist for Conducting Parent Needs Assessment, pg. 38)*
Section 5: Preparing To Be a Trainer

Some PRC staff will spend much of their time providing training on various topics to a variety of participants. Staff must respect the needs of each individual participant. However, it is also important to remain on schedule and within the designated time frame. Staff should listen carefully and thoughtfully as each participant is expressing his or her ideas and concerns. Frequently, all the response that is required is: “That is a concern we plan to discuss later in the training in the third section” or “We would like to make an appointment to meet with you at the PRC to share resources and to brainstorm solutions with you.” Asking the participant to defer further discussion keeps the training on schedule while respecting the individual participant.

Here are some ways staff may accommodate participants' needs:

Inclusion:
- Build in enough time to allow people to get to know one another in a fun, non-threatening way (an ice breaker).
- Provide an opportunity to build relationships between participants (share experiences).
- Make sure the learning environment is warm and welcoming.
- Clarify the purpose of the group and the learning expectations so people can see how they “fit” in the group.

Control:
- Allow for some choice in activities.
- Remain non-defensive.
- Practice “gatekeeping” (enable many people to participate by encouraging more withdrawn people, and by containing the more talkative).

Interaction:
- Vary small group and large group activities. This permits more intense, interpersonal interaction, but allows breaks for those who prefer the impersonality of larger groups.
- Allow people to choose the level of disclosure with which they are most comfortable. Never pressure a person to participate.
- Vary directing the group by forming small groups and allowing people to select their own partners.

Adults come to training because they want to learn. Occasionally, the needs of a participant may create challenges for the staff. Remember, the difficult behavior the individual participant may be expressing may be due to their past experiences or their personal
needs. This prevents misinterpreting the behavior as a personal attack. Staff may then respond with sensitivity rather than defensiveness.

(Note: See Appendices for Checklist for Planning and Conducting Training Workshop, pg. 39)

Consider the size of the group, similarity and diversity.

Characteristics of learners
The more you know about the participants the better you are able to customize the training session to meet their needs.

Questions to discuss with participants:
• How new is this topic to them? What do they know about the topic?
• Why are they attending the training? What are they interested in? How will they benefit?
• Would they like to share their background, previous or cultural experiences?
• What are their preferred learning styles?

Other Considerations for Planning a Training

Remember the limitations of a training session
Learning is a process and does not occur merely through one event, such as a training session. However, training sessions may contribute effectively to the learning process when they use a variety of well thought out activities to address the learning objectives.

Examples of activities:
• Guest presenters
• Panel presentations
• Role playing
• Storytelling
• Group exercises/discussions
• Field trips
• Computer-assisted/based learning
• Distance learning (teleconferencing)

Training Tips

• Remember that adults arrive at a new learning experience with the following questions: "Why am I here? Am I welcome? Do I belong? Who's in charge? What will be expected of me?" As you begin your training address these questions in an opening exercise or ice breaker.
• Establish a safe, friendly, and relaxed climate for learning.
• Acknowledge other viewpoints with respect.
• Encourage participants to share their knowledge and experiences.

• Summarize key issues by drawing on group experiences.

• Talk to people when giving a mini-lecture instead of reading to them.

• Pace the activities to accommodate both the flow of the program and the concerns of the participants.

• Give participants choices whenever possible.

• Check to see if directions are clear.

• Never become defensive. Acknowledge and set another time to address issues/problems, and continue with the training.

• Relax and keep your sense of humor.
Appendices

The following samples and resources are for Local Educational Agencies and PRC staff to review and use as they establish their center. Each locality determines their own staff needs, mission statement, etc., based on the needs of the parents and surrounding community. New PRC staff are encouraged to contact and/or visit established PRCs in surrounding localities to familiarize themselves with the resources, documentation procedures, etc., other PRCs are using.

Sample Master Plan for PRC ........................................ pages 29-30
Master Plan for PRC .............................................. pages 31-32
Sample Mission Statements ........................................ page 33
Checklist for Establishing a PRC ................................ page 34
Sample Job Description: Educator Coordinator ................. page 35
Sample Job Description: Parent Coordinator .................... page 36
Staff Profile ......................................................... page 37
Checklist for Conducting a Parent Needs Assessment ........... page 38
Checklist for Planning and Conducting a Training Workshop .. page 39
Resources and Web sites ........................................... pages 40-42
## Sample Master Plan for PRC

**Part 1: PRC Overview:** (who we are, where we are/how to contact us, what we do, our mission, who supports us)

**Part 2: PRC Management and Operating Goals and Objectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1: Schedule regular meetings with Director of Special Education to discuss support for PRC and Special Edu. Services</th>
<th>Lead Person</th>
<th>Timeline (Months in which activities will start and be completed)</th>
<th>Resources Budget Required</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J J A S O N D J F M A M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goal 2: Establish the PRC**

**Objective 1:** Obtain the space, equipment, supplies and other resources necessary to initiate PRC operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 1: Obtain the space, equipment, supplies and other resources necessary to initiate PRC operations</th>
<th>SpEd Dir.</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Center furniture, computers, phones, supplies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Objective 2:** Develop an information package for publicizing the PRC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 2: Develop an information package for publicizing the PRC</th>
<th>PRC Staff</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Brochure and folders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Objective 3:** Inform the educational community of the PRC’s opening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 3: Inform the educational community of the PRC’s opening</th>
<th>SpEd Dir PRC Staff</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Flyer, travel to schools/community agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Goal 3: Coordinate Community Resources**

**Objective 1:** Design a community resource information system for storing and retrieving information for parent referral purposes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 1: Design a community resource information system for storing and retrieving information for parent referral purposes</th>
<th>PRC Staff</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>software</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Objective 2:** Obtain information from 10 community organizations describing the services, etc., they provide for families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 2: Obtain information from 10 community organizations describing the services, etc., they provide for families</th>
<th>PRC Staff</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>some travel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Goal 4: Conduct Parent Info Needs Survey**

**Objective 1:** Design and conduct a parent training needs survey appropriate to the needs of families in your community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 1: Design and conduct a parent training needs survey appropriate to the needs of families in your community</th>
<th>SpEd Dir PRC Staff</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>copying and printing, mailing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Objective 2:** Analyze the results of the parent training needs survey and identify the needs the PRC might assist in meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 2: Analyze the results of the parent training needs survey and identify the needs the PRC might assist in meeting</th>
<th>PRC Staff</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Part 3: PRC Staff:
(Hours we work, what we do – attach job descriptions.*)

(Knowledge and skills needed, and how training will occur.)

• Planning for, managing and maintaining a PRC
• Communication and advocacy skills
• Division policies and procedures
• State and federal laws and regulations
• Resources for parents
• Other

Part 4: PRC Budget (Listing of all budget items required to support the PRC and its work.*)
Personnel/Staff

Equipment

Office operating costs (office space, phone, copying, mailing, office supplies)

Travel

Supplies

Other

* Attach Job Descriptions of PRC Staff
* *Attach Detailed Operation Budget*
Part 1: PRC Overview: (who we are, where we are/how to contact us, what we do, our mission, who supports us)

Part 2: PRC Management and Operating Goals and Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Lead Person</th>
<th>Timeline (Months in which activities will start and be completed)</th>
<th>Resources Budget Required</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal 1:</td>
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<td>J J A S O N D J F M A M</td>
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<td>Objectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 2</td>
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<td>Objectives</td>
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<td>Goal 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Add as many Goals and Objectives as needed.
**Part 3: PRC Staff:** (Center staff, hours they work, what they do – attach job descriptions*)

(Knowledge and skills needed, and how training will occur.)

- Planning for, managing and maintaining a PRC
- Communication and advocacy skills
- Division policies and procedures
- State and federal laws and regulations
- Resources for parents
- Other

**Part 4: PRC Budget** (Listing of all budget items required to support the PRC and its work**)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel/Staff</th>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Office operating costs (office space, phone, copying, mailing, office supplies)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Supplies</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Attach Job Descriptions of PRC Staff  
* *Attach Detailed Operation Budget*
Sample Mission Statements

- Promoting a cooperative partnership between parents, schools and community.

- Sharing ideas, providing practical information and emotional support to parents, professionals, people with disabilities and other advocates so we may serve the needs of exceptional children.

- Promoting an understanding of the child and the learning process while helping to facilitate cooperative working relationships among families, educators and the larger community.
# Checklist for Establishing a PRC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks/Activities</th>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>When?</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secure office space for PRC</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ List possible locations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Explore options with supervisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Assist supervisor in obtaining most desirable site</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obtain necessary office equipment</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ List essential pieces of furniture and equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Explore tax-deductible donations, education partnerships, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Paint, decorate, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Install phone service</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Speak with phone company service representatives for business</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Plan location of phone(s) carefully</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Secure answering machine</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supply the office</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ List of basic supplies: file folders, paper, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Check with school system procurement office</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Order materials</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Draft budget; estimate expenses</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(office equipment/supplies, phone)</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Meet with supervisor for direction/guidance regarding documentation, payment</td>
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<tr>
<td>and travel procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Secure telephone service and develop telephone procedures for PRC</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Schedule phone coverage</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Determine answering protocol</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Document calls</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Develop steps for referral</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Establish a confidentiality policy</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Draft guidelines for protecting information shared in confidence by parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(For example: Permission must be given by the parent(s) before talking with</td>
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<tr>
<td>teachers or personnel about child or family.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Review PRC skills and knowledge with supervisor; plan training as needed</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Develop public relations information and process</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Develop introductory presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Contact local SEAC</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Submit articles for newsletter/newspapers</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Inform organizations/contacts of PRC's services</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Draft flyer/brochure/posters/letters</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Job Description: Educator Coordinator

Qualifications:
Certified Special Education Teacher with classroom experience

Perform management functions:
• Establish timelines in consultation with Parent Coordinator and other involved staff
• Document monthly accomplishments
• Meet weekly with Parent Coordinator to review progress and plan future activities

Provide linkage to supervisor and staff
• Work with support staff to provide information regarding Parent Resource Center activities
• Schedule regular meetings with supervisor (this may vary but typically the Director of Special Education provides supervision) to report progress and activities

Public relations:
• Provide information to parents about the PRC during parent visits and training sessions, other school and community activities, and through distribution of newsletters and brochures
• Provide information to teachers and other school staff about the Parent Resource Center during staff meetings, visits to the Center and through the distribution of newsletters and brochures
• Provide information to the public and community agencies through presentations/trainings, brochures and newsletter distribution, and newspaper articles

Develop and refine a Resource Information System:
• Visit community agencies to accumulate information brochures, etc.
• Organize and display community resources in the PRC
• Create a database(notebook of community agencies

Provide training courses for parents, staff and community:
• Conduct basic training workshops
• Coordinate other parent training around needs identified in the parent survey
Sample Job Description: Parent Coordinator

**Qualifications:** Parent of a child with a disability with experience in partnering with school staff in developing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

**Perform management functions of Parent Coordinator:**
- Plan and schedule future activities with Educator Coordinator
- Meet weekly with the Educator Coordinator to discuss program
- Discuss any challenging situations that have occurred
- Maintain detailed documentation of all activities

**Public Relations:**
- Provide information to parents about the PRC during parent visits and training sessions, other school and community activities and through distribution of newsletters and brochures
- Provide information to teachers and other school staff about the PRC during staff meetings, PRC visits and through the distribution of newsletters and brochures
- Provide information to the public and community agencies through presentations/trainings, brochures and newsletter distribution and newspaper articles

**Develop and refine the Resource Information System:**
- Visit community agencies to accumulate information brochures, etc.
- Organize and display community resources in the PRC
- Create a database/notebook of community agencies

**Conduct parent survey:**
- By telephone, e-mail, and mail

**Provide training courses for parents, staff and community:**
- Conduct basic workshops
- Manage the arrangements for workshops, including recruitment of parents, securing appropriate space, collecting all materials, etc.
- Work with the Educator Coordinator to arrange for other parent training around the needs identified in the parent survey

Note: The PRC staff job descriptions include similar duties. The Virginia Department of Education intends for the parent and teacher in these positions to work closely and model the partnership between parent and school.
Staff Profile

All past experiences including volunteering, employment, education, etc., you have been involved in will help create a “snapshot” of yourself. Within this snapshot you will identify personal strengths, interests, abilities, and challenges. This information will assist you in your role as PRC staff and identify possible skill-building needs.

Past Experiences:

Strengths/Interests:

Challenges:

Skill Building Needs:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks/Activities</th>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>When?</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Prepare for the needs assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Establish a committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Develop questionnaire</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Draft cover letter</td>
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<td>· Determine distribution of questionnaire by mail, individual, group presentation, e-mail, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Schedule second meeting to discuss survey results</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Conduct the needs assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Type and duplicate final questionnaire, cover letter</td>
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<td>· Schedule interviews if needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Mail or e-mail questionnaire</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Conduct interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Process the needs assessment data</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Tabulate survey responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Analyze results</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Meet with committee and/or Special Education Director</td>
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<td>· Determine how data is to be used</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Prioritize training needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Formulate parent training objectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Develop a needs assessment report</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Draft an outline of the contents</td>
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<td>· Write narrative sections</td>
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<td>· Arrange for assistance (if needed) of data presentation</td>
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<td>· Determine distribution of report</td>
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<td>· Complete report</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Duplicate and disseminate</td>
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</table>
## Checklist for Planning and Conducting a Training Workshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks/Activities</th>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>When?</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate with administrator to schedule workshop dates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determine the target group(s) for workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secure spaces, inspect room, determine room arrangement plan, tables and equipment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Publicize workshop</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provide newspaper and newsletter advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Prepare public service announcements</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Arrange radio/talk show/educational TV air time</td>
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<td>• Arrange personal presentations to school and parent organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Implement intensive “in-school” recruitment for workshop participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Distribute flyers/posters</td>
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<td>• Post on Web sites</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Encourage and support parent participation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Send letter of invitation to parents from teachers and school administrators</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Check with school system procurement office</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recruit populations within geographic area of school clusters</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Encourage letters from principals followed by home calls from teachers</td>
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<td>• Send last-minute reminders home from school with students, or contact by e-mail</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provide individual, personal invitations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ask parents to recruit a “buddy”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Offer persistent, positive outreach to families</td>
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<td>• Offer to visit home with resources for family</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Follow up with families</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Implement workshop strategies, evaluate and follow up with families</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pre-register participants, design and reproduce registration forms, distribute registration forms, take online registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop, reproduce, mail, or e-mail welcome materials and confirm registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Prepare or obtain materials for workshop; reproduce and prepare workshop</td>
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<td>participants’ packets</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Order and prepare workshop supplies: name tags, markers, flip charts, refreshments, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Locate and arrange audiovisual materials: screen, laptop, LCD projector, cords, chart stands, etc.</td>
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<td>• Set up room for training, arrange room, post directions to room, set up and test equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Conduct workshop and collect on-site participant evaluation of the workshop</td>
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Resources and Web Sites

Center for Family Involvement (CFI)  www.centerforfamilyinvolvement.org
The Center for Family Involvement works with families to increase their skills as advocates, mentors and leaders so their family members with disabilities can lead the lives they want for themselves. CFI provides information, resources and training for family members and professionals.

Channing Bete Company  www.channing-bete.com
The Channing Bete Company's mission is to strengthen individuals, families, and communities by reinforcing healthy behaviors and commitment to positive social values. A variety of brochures, booklets, CDs and presentation materials are available to encourage parent involvement.

Compass Learning  www.compasslearning.com
The Parent Toolkit® is a Web-based program filled with resources to help schools increase parental involvement. The resources are easy and accessible, with hundreds of standards-aligned activities in reading, language arts, mathematics, and science.

Great Schools  www.greatschools.net
Great Schools empowers and inspires parents to get involved in their children's development and educational success. They offer preschool, elementary, middle, and high school information for public, private and charter schools nationwide.

Harvard Family Research Project  www.hfrp.org
The work of this project strengthens family, school, and community partnerships, early childhood care and education, promotes evaluation and accountability, and offers professional development to those who work directly with children, youth, and families. The audiences for HFRP's work include policymakers, practitioners, researchers, evaluators, philanthropists, teachers, school administrators, and concerned individuals. The Storybook Corner, found on their Web site, offers resources to help educators, families, and those who work with families promote the awareness, discussion, and practice of family involvement in children's education in a wide range of settings. Launched in partnership with Reading Is Fundamental, Storybook Corner provides a list of storybooks with family involvement themes and tools for using the storybooks.
Resources and Web Sites (continued)

**National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education** [www.ncpie.org](http://www.ncpie.org)
At NCPIE, the mission is simple: to advocate the involvement of parents and families in their children's education, and to foster relationships between home, school, and community to enhance the education of all of the nation's young people. NCPIE serves as a clearinghouse for resources that help build and facilitate effective family-school partnerships.

**National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)** [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)
The center that provides information to the nation on disabilities in children and youth; programs and services for infants, children, and youth with disabilities; IDEA, the nation's special education law; No Child Left Behind, the nation's general education law; and research-based information on effective practices for children with disabilities.

**National PTA** [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)
As the largest volunteer child advocacy association in the nation, National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) provides parents and families with a powerful voice to speak on behalf of every child and the best tools to help their children be safe, healthy, and successful – in school and in life.

**National PTO** [www.ptotoday.com](http://www.ptotoday.com)
Toolkits are available to encourage parent involvement. Access requires registration.

**PACER Center** [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)
With assistance to individual families, workshops, materials for parents and professionals, and leadership in securing a free and appropriate public education for all children, PACER's work affects and encourages families in Minnesota and across the nation.

**Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC)** [www.peatc.org](http://www.peatc.org)
Virginia's Parent Training and Information Center provides services and support for families and professionals, easy-to-understand, research-based information and training, and opportunities for strategic partnerships and advocacy for systemic improvement.
Resources and Web Sites (continued)

Parent Institute  www.parent-institute.com
The mission of The Parent Institute is to encourage parent involvement in the education of their children. The Parent Institute publishes a variety of materials including newsletters, booklets, audio CDs, brochures, videos and presentation kits.

Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers www.taalliance.org
The Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers (the ALLIANCE) is an innovative partnership of one national and six regional parent technical assistance centers, each funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). These seven projects comprise a unified technical assistance system for the purpose of developing, assisting, and coordinating the over 100 Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) and Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The national and regional parent technical assistance centers work to strengthen the connections to the larger OSEP Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network and fortify partnerships between Parent Centers and education systems at local, state, and national levels.

The Florida Partnership for Family Involvement in Education www.floridapartnership.usf.edu
The mission is to increase parental awareness of education issues, develop and sustain partnerships and networks with other organizations, agencies and family centers and to increase numbers and types of partnerships between home and school by providing information, training and support for families through toll-free number, quarterly statewide newsletters, fact sheets, tip sheets, Web site, and resource packets.

The SEDL National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools www.sedl.org
SEDL supports school, family, and community partnerships by establishing partnerships of their own to advance the changing role of families and communities in student learning that is being promoted by the No Child Left Behind Act. They also develop and distribute research-based resources and tools on school, family, and community partnerships to educators, family members, and community members.

US Department of Education www.ed.gov
This site offers various resources to assist parents with school success for their children. No Child Left Behind resources are available here. Reaching All Families, Creating Family Friends Schools is a publication from the Office of Educational Research & Improvement designed for school staff to assist them in involving parents as active participants in their children’s education.
Guidebook for
Virginia
Parent Resource Center

www.vaprcs.org

Is a joint project of the Virginia Department of Education and the Center For Family Involvement at the Partnership for People with Disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University

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