



## OAR releases *Navigating the Special Education System* guidebook for parents

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ARLINGTON, VA – With the school year now underway, the Organization for Autism Research (OAR) is excited to announce the release of *Navigating the Special Education System*, the seventh guidebook in its highly regarded *Life Journey through Autism* series. The guide is designed to help parents meet the unique educational needs of their child with autism, a task that can be burdensome or downright overwhelming even before a child reaches school age.

The guide begins with a detailed overview of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which governs how special education is administered in schools. It then discusses each critical component of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the document that outlines a student’s target objectives and special education services he or she requires. The guide also reviews the timeline of services from early intervention through transition, shares tips for being an effective advocate for your child (including how to disagree with your school), and helps families prepare for a move to a new school, district, or state.

“I love this guide... it really keeps me honest,” said Charlotte Emery, an autism mother and *RUN FOR AUTISM* participant from Virginia. “The outline in the Table of Contents is a great issue-spotting checklist, the text is just detailed enough to be helpful without becoming overly burdensome, and the appendices tailor things down to the nitty-gritty for when you need it. It’s a great addition to my ready references.”

The guide’s extensive appendices empower parents with common special education terminology, examples of how to craft effective IEP goals, a glossary of related services (e.g. speech language pathology) and accommodations (e.g. extended time), and how to go about employing a professional advocate. It also includes recommended reading lists and state-specific resources.

*Navigating the Special Education System* is the second of three resources developed as part of OAR’s “Autism in the Schoolhouse” initiative. The first, *Kit for Kids*, is a colorful, interactive program that teaches typically developing elementary and middle school children about their peers with autism. The final piece, *Understanding Autism: A Guide for Secondary Teachers*, is a one-hour DVD designed to help teachers support students with autism in general education settings. The project is currently in production and set for completion in December.

The guide was conceived of and written in large part by Allison Gilmour, OAR's Director of Programs and Community Outreach from August 2010 until July 2012, with research contributions from Michelle Kuhn, a 2011 summer intern. Several parents, special education experts, and members of the broader autism community reviewed the content of the guide, along with members of OAR's [Board of Directors](#) and [Scientific Council](#). Production and distribution of the guide was made possible by a generous contribution from Lisa Hussman, a member of OAR's Board of Directors, and the Lisa Higgins Hussman Foundation.

A [web-friendly version](#) is available at the OAR Web site, [www.researchautism.org](http://www.researchautism.org). For more information or to order a hard copy, please contact Ben Kaufman, Director, Programs and Community Outreach, at (703)243-9762 or [bkaufman@researchautism.org](mailto:bkaufman@researchautism.org).

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