

Docket ID: ED-2017-OS-0074

The "Dear Colleague Letter and Resource Guide on ADHD"

https:// www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201607-504-adhd.pdf

Dear Department of Education,

Please KEEP the ADHD Dear Colleague Letter. Our story is that millions of families share. I hope you take a moment to read it.

Our family struggled for years in the public school system to receive accommodations for our bright, ADHD diagnosed son. Early in our son's education, we had no guidance and no understanding of why our child was failing instead of thriving in a great, small, school district. We have had teachers with no idea how to approach our son's differences and blatantly refused accommodations or techniques outside of their standard teaching methods. Because they just didn't know how. None of us did.

The school's, part-time, contracted therapist was grossly inept and gave him an initial diagnosis of Oppositional Defiance Disorder because they did not understand or have knowledge and experience with ADHD. The therapist had to literally look it up O.D.D in the DSM to realize how completely wrong they were. If you are unaware of the O.D.D. condition Google it. O.D.D. is severe and terrifying for a parent to hear. That was definitely not our son. The therapist based this 'diagnosis' on our son's opposition to a teacher, who was hostile towards his inability to function in a traditional classroom. Our son suffered tremendously under the constant failure, criticism, vilification, and punishment. The teacher absolutely refused to give him positive reinforcement for what she considered "Expected behavior". His behavior and self-esteem were in a continual spiraled downward, as were his grades. It affected our entire family and it still affects us today. Once the school therapist

Our story has a happy middle, not end because our son is still a student. Years of uncountable hours of stress, research, communication, struggle on our own and with private therapy finally made our school system understand and provide some relief.

Here's our timeline: Our son was identified as an atypical child 14 days into Kindergarten; was evaluated by the school contracted therapist in 1st grade; didn't receive official 504 accommodations until 4th grade and FINALLY an IEP in 7th grade. And yet we still had to persevere to get him additional, yet simple, support in 8th grade. IT shouldn't be this difficult.

If the school had this resource, if WE had this clear and simple resource in our hands to present to the school from the beginning, our son would be a different person today. There are over 1 million people diagnosed with ADHD. How many more children and families are suffering undiagnosed in school? This will ultimately affect who they will become as adults.

Teachers and schools do not always understand, know how to identify, evaluate, or accept ADHD as a true disability. There were no resources to help us. Help that our son desperately needed in a school system set up to teach one type of brain, in one type of environment. Please do not deny parents and educators in the public and charter school system a clear and effective guide to helping students with ADHD succeed. In a world of No Child Left Behind, we are leaving undiagnosed ADHD children behind. Do we want more successful people in our society? Yes. Then let them start on the first day of school.

For this one story, there are millions that have a similar experience. Families that haven't commented. Families that have no idea this resource is about to be cut. Families that don't know that they will need this one day. They will suffer. Don't take it away. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,
Heidi Mamula