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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

February 22, 2009

Susan E. Myers
Executive Director
ASK Resource Center
321 E. 6th St.
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear Ms. Myers:

I am writing in support of your application for funding as Iowa's Parent Training and Information Center (**CFDA 84.328M**) funded through the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

As a consultant with the Iowa Department of Education, with responsibilities for administering certain procedural safeguards, namely preappeal conferences, mediations, State complaints, resolution meetings, and due process hearings, I have had the opportunity to work with the ASK Resource Center since its inception nine years ago. Here are some examples of contributions and/or collaborative efforts I have personally been involved with the ASK Resource Center.

- When addressing differences between parents, the districts and the Area Education Agencies (AEAs) the philosophy of the Iowa Department of Education and the ASK Resource Center has been quite similar. Both agencies believe parents need to be aware of their options and resources for resolving differences, and they need to be given information about resolving differences at the earliest and lowest level possible.
- When I receive any communications from the parents, usually in the form of a personal phone call, during my conversation of providing information for problem solving, and including information about resources, I always include the name of the ASK Resource Center (or Parent Training and Information Center), along with the appropriate number (local or 1-800 number)
- Whenever contact and communications have been made with a parent, I request my secretary to send a "parent packet" which includes a brochure about the ASK Resource Center. They keep us supplied with this hand-out. This same "parent packet" is typically provided when I speak before the numerous audiences that I am asked to make presentations. For example, at one course at Drake University, the instructor asks the students to each make a parent packet for the parents of the children they have (or will have) and they are made aware of the importance of including that brochure.

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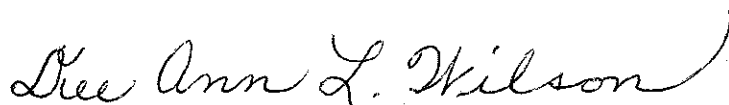
- In turn, the Department provides numerous handouts that will help the ASK Resource Center better understand our procedures so they in turn can better assist people they come in contact with as they seek to serve as effective advocates for children and youth with disabilities. Examples include the procedures for State Complaints, age of majority materials, and brochures for *Preparing for the Preappeal*, *Contacts for AEA Resolution Facilitator Coordinators*, and *Preparing for the AEA Resolution Facilitator Process*.
- The Department will be holding a face-to-face day-long meeting in the near future to “plan a plan” to examine all the ways possible for providing skill building for conflict resolution trainings (preservice and inservice). Susan Myers was asked to serve on this committee because of her being the Executive Director of the ASK Resource Center (and we certainly wanted her organization’s representation.) In addition, the initial planning team identified Susan because of her skills as a past contracted State mediator for special education as well as being a highly competent trainer with the Conflict Resolution Center of Iowa. Such experience (and reputation) holds her in high esteem with being able to make valuable contributions.
- Whenever the Department offers audioconferences through LRP relating to special education legal issues, the ASK Resource is always invited and one or more representatives regularly attend. Often, after the session is over, some in attendance will stay to discuss what we heard, giving the Iowa critique and experiences, hopefully proving to be helpful to everyone in attendance.
- Whenever the Department sponsors the annual Special Education Law Conference, the ASK Resource Center is given approximately six registration-free invitations. We are always pleased when they send a representative for each invitation they receive.
- One of the early more formal ways for resolving differences but still not within the IDEA mandated requirements is the unique Iowa AEA Resolution Facilitator Process. This is a form of mediation. I am very appreciative that *The PTI Press* has been one of the earliest promoters and continued supporters of parties using this process. Wisely, they have used the same “advertisement” so the drawing consistently attracts the reader and cannot be overlooked when reading the publication.
- The ASK Resource Center has initiated contact with me by asking me to provide presentations on certain topics throughout the years. Obviously, because I am aware of the value of collaborative relationships and because they are very gracious and friendly hosts, I always, without any hesitation, accept such invitations.
- Communication is foremost with the ASK Resource Center. It is not uncommon to receive phone calls asking me for my professional opinion or seeking clarification of some issue or policy and comparing how that meshes with their understanding. Or, they may believe some trends are surfacing based on some recent phone conversations and may inquire if I have found the same.
- Parents have called me with concerns, indicating they had talked to the ASK Resource Center, and evidently, ASK had provided the parents with my name and

telephone number. This indicates to me that they are getting options and resources to the parents.

- Districts and AEAs have occasionally talked to me, indicating a representative from ASK Resource was in attendance at some type of meeting involving a child.
- We have worked with ASK Resource, although limited, with helping find interpreters for parents of children with limited English proficiency. Several years ago, somebody from ASK Resource Center spoke before the Administrative Law Judges and State contracted Mediators during a quarterly inservice after the group requested additional information about ways to make certain the procedures are parent friendly for parents from different cultures and non-English languages.
- Every three years the State conducts a day-long meeting to discuss ways to improve the processes and procedures used involving preappeal conferences and mediations. We always invite the ASK Resource Center to be one of the important constituencies.
- Iowa is a state with one of the lowest rates when examining the number of mediations, complaints, and due process hearings per 10,000 students. The reasons for this are multi-faced, obviously. When I provide presentations to the numerous audiences, my PowerPoint has one slide that asks, "Why?" One of the important contributors is the Parent Training and Information Center. (They have already been included at the beginning of the presentation when I provide essential resources for parents.) Once again I highlight the important mission and contributions the ASK Resource Center makes.

In closing please accept this letter of support as a strong recommendation that the ASK Resource Center be selected to serve as the state of Iowa's Parent Training and Information Center

Yours truly,



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