

6 Questions Every Parent Should be Asking about Their Child's IEP

by Ben Glass



You can see the videos we shot with Joan at www.youtube.com/BenGlassLaw.

I had a very special guest on my LiveLifeBig program this month, and we were talking about an issue that's very near and dear to my heart: education. Every parent wants the best education possible for their children, and we live in an age now where a child's education can be specially tailored for them.

In Virginia, this takes the form of an IEP, or an Individualized Education Program. When executed properly, it can be a godsend for a child who doesn't thrive in the traditional education mold. For a lot of parents, however, the whole IEP process can be confusing and overwhelming. This month, we welcomed Educational Attorney Joan Proper, who shared with us six questions parents should be asking about their child's IEP, but often don't know enough to ask...

1 Is the child's diagnosis up to date?

Also called the child's Disability Designation, you have to make sure that the report accurately reflects what the child is going through. It's very common for one learning disability to be part of (or lead to) another. Learning disabilities can sometimes be better understood as part of a "spectrum" of disorders rather than a singular issue.

2 Is the IEP actually being implemented?

This is a big one. All your hard work with the school and the child can go to waste if the instructors are not following through with the program. Measurable goals are key. If there are no ways to tell whether the child is progressing, the IEP isn't doing what it was intended to do.

3 When is the last time the child had a complete formal evaluation?

This can be done by the school or by a private institution. Everyone thinks they know the child's needs or what the child is going through, but it's a good idea to have a real evaluation done every two or three years. What's their reading level? What math skills can they perform? What's their emotional status? Formal testing is an invaluable measuring stick.

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What Winners Will Be Doing This Summer

There are two kinds of kids every summer: Those who mope around and complain that there's nothing to do, and those who take action and get involved in something fun.

The good news is that there are resources all around you in Virginia, especially when it comes to volunteering. We've become good friends with the folks over at Volunteer Fairfax, which connect volunteers with the people who need them all over the D.C. metro area.

We asked Volunteer Fairfax for 5 good reasons kids should volunteer this summer, and here's what they said (along with my commentary, since I couldn't resist):

1 Make New Friends

Next year's prom date may be the volunteer beside you. Bonding over a volunteer opportunity like helping on the Alzheimer's Help Line is way better than bonding over a TV show. (That's a real opportunity, by the way. Check out the list at www.VolunteerFairfax.org. You'll be shocked at what you can do right here in Virginia!)

2 Earn Your Service Hours

You know you need them. Why not earn your service hours on your own terms, doing something you actually want to do? You'll be happy you did when everyone else is scrambling for service hours during the panic-filled school year.



Volunteer Fairfax connects volunteers with the people who need them all over the DC metro area.

3 It's Way Better than Sitting at Home

This summer, you could be cycling with Tour de Cure to raise money for diabetes research; you could be doing graphic design, or even DJ'ing at a senior center. You could be tutoring kids or planning events. You could be restoring homes through Habitat for Humanity or driving for Meals on Wheels! There really are more cool opportunities than you could imagine.

4 Your Parents Will Brag about You

Guaranteed.

5 Volunteer Fairfax Makes It Really Easy

These opportunities are for everyone, but if you are 18 years or younger, you can go to www.VolunteerFairfax.org/individuals and use the Directory of Youth Service Opportunities. Volunteer Fairfax will help connect you with opportunities that are a perfect match for your interests and skill set.

So, what are you waiting for? Head on over to www.VolunteerFairfax.org and tell them that Ben sent you. ■



The BenGlassLaw lawyers. Left to right: Jose Caballe, Ben Glass, James Abrenio.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT BGL?

We represent a young lady who was under the care of a major HMO in our area almost from the time she was born. Over the years, she had repeated complaints of pain that, when looked at as a whole, suggested that something was wrong with one of her kidneys. A congenital obstruction was only recently discovered, resulting in an operation to remove her kidney. We claim that her kidney could have been saved with an appropriate workup and simple testing done years ago.

We represent a client whose medical bills for cancer treatment went unpaid after her health insurance company denied them. The insurance company claimed that she had a "pre-existing condition." We reviewed the records and believe that we can prove that not only did she not have a previously diagnosed condition, but she had nothing serious going on that would have warranted her even seeing a physician.

In the Fredericksburg area, we represent a woman who underwent laparoscopic removal of her gallbladder. We claim the intraoperative testing clearly showed that the surgeon had clipped the wrong vessel, and when he caught it, he caused devastating injuries. This particular surgeon also lost a huge case several years ago. ■



Employee Spotlight: Laura Vezzani

Life doesn't always turn out the way we planned. Laura Vezzani, Marketing Assistant for Great Legal Marketing,

knows that firsthand. Her dream from an early age was to be in radio, and she honed her skills while working at radio station Star 94 in Atlanta with Darik Kristofer, the current afternoon DJ for 94.7 Fresh FM in Washington, D.C. (She also worked with several charities, and she was a caretaker for a while, too.)

When Laura came across one of Ben's Craigslist ads, her career path changed drastically. From her first interview with Marketing Director Charley Mann, she knew that this was where she was meant to be. Once she officially joined the BenGlassLaw/Great Legal Marketing team, she found a new dream: staying here as long as possible!

Laura's sunny disposition and strong work ethic are well known. Colin Lynch, Video Studio Manager, stated, "Laura is a fantastic person to be around. You can tell she cares deeply about everyone she meets, and you can always rely on her to bring joy and optimism into the day. She's kind, intelligent, and compassionate." However, "she is terrible at naming stuffed animals."

Charley Mann revealed that, "Laura has been with us for five months now, but it feels like she's been part of the 'family' a whole lot longer. She's been a step-up-to-the-plate type of person who doesn't shun responsibility which, in my book, matters more than just about anything else in a smaller office like ours. I'll gladly take one Laura on my team over two of just about anyone else."

Mairim Bartholomew, Executive Director of Client Services, also spoke fondly of Laura, "Laura has been a wonderful addition to the BGL/Great Legal Marketing team. She comes to work eager to learn and with a smile on her face every day. Laura started as a part-time employee to assist me with GLM tasks and was quickly promoted to full time when we saw how well she fit with the team and how much she had to contribute. We are thrilled to have her and her can-do attitude!"

In her spare time, Laura enjoys reading about psychology, which she majored in while attending college in Georgia. She also holds the constellation Cassiopeia close to her heart, and she shared that every time she sees it in the sky, she feels like she's where she belongs. (That constellation must have been visible to her the day she joined the BGL/GLM team!) ■

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4 Does the IEP provide an accurate Present Level of Performance, including goals?

It's not enough to just say, "This is where the child stands." The best IEPs have goals in place to overcome obstacles. Does your child's IEP have reasonable, measurable, step-by-step goals to determine progress?

5 Is my child's behavior interfering with his or her education?

Some behaviors are obvious, like aggression or lashing out in different ways, but other issues like depression or simple non-compliance can be more subtle. Is your child not doing work? Just sitting at her desk and putting her head down? Just because the child isn't getting in trouble doesn't mean that everything is OK.

6 What diploma options are there with my child's IEP?

Schools are getting much better at understanding IEPs and making programs that give all children a chance to succeed, but it's an ongoing process. In Virginia, most kids are looking at a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Diploma. The good news is that many children with IEPs still have access to Advanced Diplomas, but it's a question you should be asking from the start.

You can see the videos we shot with Joan at www.youtube.com/BenGlassLaw. ■

Do you have your own question you'd like to ask Ben and his team of experts? Go to www.JustAskBenGlass.com and your question may be featured in our next video.

Reminder About Our Firm's Communication Policy

Our promise to you is that while we are working on your case, we don't take inbound phone calls, faxes or emails. Ben Glass takes no inbound unscheduled phone calls whatsoever. It makes him much more productive and helps get your case resolved faster. You can always call the office at 703-544-7876, and schedule an in-person or phone appointment, usually within 24-48 hours. This is a lot better than the endless game of "phone tag" played by most businesses today. Remember, too, that email is "quick," but is checked no more than twice a day. Replies are then scheduled into the calendar. So if it's really important, don't email—call the office instead.

This publication is intended to educate the general public about personal injury, medical malpractice, and small business issues. It is not intended to be legal advice. Every case is different. The information in this newsletter may be freely copied and distributed as long as the newsletter is copied in its entirety.

3915 Old Lee Highway Suite 22-B
Fairfax, VA 22030
tel 703.544.7876 fax 703.783.0686
www.BenGlassLaw.com

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Liam Glass: Proud Life Scout on the Path to Eagle Scout

Liam Glass (Ben's nephew) stands proudly in the Multi-Purpose room in the basement of the Wesley Methodist Church in Vienna, VA.

Liam, a Life Scout with Troop 976 of Vienna, is on the path to Eagle Scout. Eagle candidates are required to plan, develop, and give leadership to others in a service project helpful to any religious institution, school, or non-scout-related entity around the community.

Liam and his crew of volunteers, with a generous donation from Ben for supplies, cleaned and painted the room shown so that the church's Youth Group and others would have a new place to meet. It is amazing to see the skills these young men acquire, the adventures they experience, and the many people they help along the way in the Scouting Program.

Liam says, "Thanks, Uncle Ben, for supporting me on my project." ■