



## Ten Strategies for Working with Professionals to Affect Change

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- 1. Be certain that you have a clear vision and can articulate what you want.** Professionals become confused when people (parents) give them mixed messages and that can lead to inaction on their part.
- 2. Don't assume that service providers better understand or have any more power over the system than you have.** Often they are just as frustrated and feel just as inadequate as you do.
- 3. Be patient.** Systems take a long time to create and even longer to dismantle. That doesn't mean, however, that you lose your sense of urgency.
- 4. Be persistent.** The old cliché about the squeaky wheel (gets the oil), works well here. Sometimes you'll get what you want just so you'll leave someone alone.
- 5. Find an ally in the system.** Talk to everyone until you find that person who agrees with what you want to happen. Work with that person and nurture a relationship.
- 6. Build coalitions around specific issues.** You may not agree on everything, but work with those people who are willing to come together around a particular issue.
- 7. Be principled.** Don't sell out on something just because the system wears you down. Always remember what you wanted in the first place.
- 8. Listen.** Don't put yourself in the position of being the *authority*. Others have valuable insights to share, but you won't hear them if you don't listen.
- 9. Be positive.** Don't spend your energies trying to tear something down, but rather to build something new. Always express what you want in a positive way.
- 10. Be prepared to hang in for the duration.** Think of it like running: The sprinter moves very quickly but can only keep that pace for a very short time; a marathon runner learns how to pace and is good for long distances. It's a marathon we're all running together.

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