

I am Annette Clarahan and I am with the Family and Educator Partnership (FEP) here at GPAEA. The FEP Program is a federal grant that has been working here at GPAEA for 40 years, but as of June 30th the program will no longer exist as ordered by the Director of the Dept. of Education.

Because of how closely I've worked between school districts and the AEA I feel compelled to share with you my experience and knowledge of the system I only wish all of you could appreciate. Why? Because anyone who truly understood it, would never try to dismantle this treasure we have in Iowa called Area Education Agencies..

The AEA is such a meticulous system - we need to conduct a study without a bill moving forward so we don't miss critical services and resources for OUR kids.

Today, one of the calls I took was from a single parent of a child with Autism. She has three children and significant mental health issues of her own. This isn't the first time she has called. This Mom trusts no one, but she does seem to trust the Regional Special Ed Director and myself at this point. During our last call she shared that she was being evicted because of her son's Autism (being too loud). Our families have a lot on their plates and many are in survival mode just getting through each day. If they are concerned about eviction, getting everyone to therapy and worried if their child is getting what they need at school, I can only imagine what this is doing to the child with challenging behaviors .

Our families need a team of experts from the school (Teacher, Spec Educ. Teacher, Principal, Counselor, Nurse), and the AEA staff (Consultant, Social Worker, School Psych, Challenging Behavior & Autism, Hearing, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech, Vision, Assistive Technology, Orientation & Mobility) working closely to build those relationships. We want families to know that we All want what's best for their child. So, when there is a crisis they can trust us. The more we know about our kids and families we serve, the more we can put the proper supports into place to help them be successful, productive citizens.

Who will be overseeing the fidelity and the oversight of the IEP's? They will need to be in the school building to see that is being carried out. Hopefully not the Dept of Ed. You can't do that from Des Moines, and you MUST know about Special Education Administrative Rules & Law.

We only have one chance to get this right! Vote NO for OUR kids.

Thank You for your time and commitment to our state..
Annette Clarahan