DOING IT RIGHT—TEN EASY WAYS TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION FOR EVERYONE

1. 1) At all intakes including internet intakes ask the question “Do you have a disability that affects your ability to give or get information? Then if the person says YES give them clear direction on how to request accommodations.

2. When someone asks for accommodations (even if they do not use that word) begin the interactive process. Ask them if you can schedule a call (calling out of the blue might be hard). If you cannot provide a requested accommodation ask the parent more to find another way.

3. If someone identifies a disability including but not limited to brain injury, mental illness, or other disability that might signal communication needs ask clarifying questions. Repeat back what you heard to make sure it was right.

4. Summarize the content at the end and ask them if they need an email or short memo also capturing the basic points of the conversation.

5. When sending letters use at least 14 point font and bullet points with plenty of white space. If a response is needed by a date bold and box the deadline.

6. Always have a phone number, email and regular mail address on any letter/form clearly available with an invitation to call with questions. Bold and box contact information and do not use multiple contacts on one page.

7. Give people clear instructions on what you do and do not want/need to process a complaint. How far should they go back? What detail do you need? Do you want as much as possible at the first step?

8. Tell people in writing and verbally what to expect in terms of timelines and the process.

9. Ask if they have any questions at the end of every interaction.

10. When dealing with someone who is upset or going very fast ask what you can do to help.