The Metro Nashville Public Schools Department of Exceptional Education is in need of Surrogate Parents to represent the educational interests of students with disabilities.

All children with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate public education under state and federal special education laws. Included in these laws is a mandate that parents of children with disabilities must have the opportunity to actively participate in the educational decision-making process.

Unfortunately, some children with disabilities do not have parents who can fulfill this very important role, leaving their educational planning solely to representatives from their local school system or other agencies.

Federal law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and state rules, regulations and minimum standards require that an individual must be appointed to make decisions regarding the education children who are in this category must receive.

What is a Surrogate Parent?
A surrogate parent is a volunteer who is appointed by a local education agency/school to assist children who do not have parents or family members who can be their advocate.

The surrogate parent has all of the rights, and can make all of the special education or early intervention decisions, that usually are made by the child's parents. Surrogate parents can review educational records; request and consent to evaluations and reevaluations; and challenge the recommendations of the education or early intervention agency by requesting informal and formal dispute resolution procedures.

A surrogate parent does not have any rights and responsibilities for the child outside of the special education process.

When Does a Child Require a Surrogate Parent?
A child with a disability requires a surrogate when:
- the parent (as defined in § 300.519) or guardian cannot be identified;
- the LEA, after reasonable efforts, cannot discover the whereabouts of a parent;
- the child is a ward of the State; or
- the child is an unaccompanied homeless youth as defined in section 725 (6) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(6)).

What are the Responsibilities of a Surrogate Parent?
The surrogate parent acts as a substitute parent and is given the responsibility of determining the child's educational experiences. A surrogate parent is not responsible for any financial costs or direct care of the child with disabilities.
The surrogate parent represents the child in every step of the education process including identification, evaluation and educational placement. The Surrogate Parent fulfills the parent role at all IEP Team meetings and works to ensure that the child receives FAPE.

A surrogate parent is also responsible for keeping confidential all information from the child’s educational, medical, or social services records.

**Who Can be a Surrogate?**
Any citizen of the United States or permanent resident who is 18 years old or older and has no conflict of interest concerning the child’s education may serve as an educational surrogate and must be of *good moral character*. The educational surrogate must act in the best interest of the student he/she represents. Furthermore, an educational surrogate may not be an employee of a public agency providing care, custody or educational services to the specific child in need of educational surrogate representation.

**How much Time and Money will this Commitment Take?**
Surrogate parents are required to devote approximately one day to the training provided by Metro Nashville Public Schools, at least annually.

After a student with disabilities is assigned, the educational surrogate reviews the student’s school record well enough to understand the student's needs strengths, and interests as well as their school history. A meeting between the student and surrogate is arranged. After that, surrogates attend IEP meetings and parent-teacher conferences.

This costs you nothing and training is provided free of charge.

**Interested? Have Questions?**
- If you are interested in attending a training to become a surrogate parent please fill out the form: [Yes! I am interested in becoming a Surrogate](mailto:kassie.williams@mnps.org)
- Email: [kassie.williams@mnps.org](mailto:kassie.williams@mnps.org)

**Training Opportunities:**
- Monday, December 2, 2019 - 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Martin Center, 2400 Fairfax Ave. Nashville, TN 37212 (classroom 2)
- Monday, December 2, 2019 - 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 pm, Martin Center, 2400 Fairfax Ave. Nashville, TN 37212 (classroom 2)
- Wednesday, December 4, 2019 - 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., 835 Robertson Academy Road Nashville, TN 37220