



Empowering families of children with disabilities to become their child's greatest advocates.

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Hi, we are VELA.

Whether you are just starting your journey with navigating disability with your child or you are far along on this path, we are here to support you.

Below are some things that might be helpful to you...

First, take a deep breath

Get Organized

Put together a binder with all of your child's paperwork in one place (evals, school plans, therapy goals, etc) Ask providers to give you copies of this paperwork if you don't have it!

Remember, you know your child best

Tell others about your child's strengths, needs, dreams, and interests. You are the expert and a key part of the team!

Ask questions

This can all feel very confusing. Ask for examples, clarification, and ask questions. Remember that you have a right to understand your child's needs and plans.

Be gentle with yourself

This can feel like a lot. Give yourself permission to feel all the feelings and care for yourself too.

Connect with VELA

Take a course, attend a support group and more- remember that you are not alone. We are here to walk side by side with you.

Natasha & Simon

Part of the journey of one of our VELA graduates

01.

Natasha's brilliant and creative son, Simon, has ADHD and autism. As he entered middle school, he had a harder time with learning and friendships.

02.

At her last special education meeting, Natasha signed a 55 page document – not understanding any of the services, acronyms, or terms to help her son.

03.

The very next week, she joined VELA's virtual Special Education Course where she learned how to understand that 55 page document to better advocate for her son.

While in the parking lot, Natasha broke down in tears and called VELA.

04.

Natasha also met 12 other parents in her class just like her.

05.

Natasha gained knowledge, confidence, and resources, to better support her son. By the next school meeting, she got Simon the services he needed.

VELA Services

Through interactive, culturally responsive courses and wraparound services, families gain knowledge, empowerment, resilience and community to ensure that their children thrive.

Our services are available in Spanish or English, virtually or in person – and at no cost to families.

Courses

Interactive 5 session courses taught by a VELA Parent Facilitator. Course options include: Special Education, Autism, Transition to Adulthood and Caregiver Wellness.

Monthly Support Groups

Monthly groups led by a clinical social worker to give and receive emotional support and meet other parents

Case Management

Individualized supportive case management with a social worker can help families connect with services and resources. As needed and by appointment only.

Family Fun Days

A dedicated day of inclusive fun and community building for VELA families

Why VELA?

Navigating doctors, schools, therapies and more on behalf of your child with disabilities can feel overwhelming and isolating. We know it's hard-so many acronyms, meetings and paperwork to understand and keep track of. All while trying to figure out what's best for your child, and how to get it.

That's where VELA can support.

With VELA, you will...

- Meet other families and receive emotional support
- Learn how to support your child's strengths and needs
- Connect to key services and resources
- Learn how to advocate for your child
- Learn how to navigate special education, therapies and more



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FAQs

Which disabilities are represented?

VELA works with families of children with ANY disability. We currently serve families of children ages 0-18 with over 21 different diagnoses including but not limited to autism, down syndrome, dyslexia, ADHD, cerebral palsy and more.

My child is in the evaluation process, can we still connect with VELA?

Of course! We know that getting an evaluation can take time. You can meet 1:1 with one of our social workers for Case Management, join a Monthly Support and/or enroll in a relevant course.

Can you attend my child's ARD meeting?

No. VELA's focus and goal is to prepare *you* by giving you the knowledge and skills to do this on behalf of your child.

Do I have to live in Austin to enroll in VELA services?

No! VELA's virtual services can be accessed wherever you are.

When are your courses offered and how long are they?

Courses meet weekly for 5 sessions and offered multiple times per year. Check our website for dates!

Do I need to have Medicaid/Insurance to participate?

We believe in equitable access to care, and since we are a non-profit organization, our services are free to you. You do not need to show proof of income or have insurance to receive services.

Can I choose what service I need/or what to start with?

Yes. VELA knows each families journey is different- you can take a course, or join a support group or get case management or come play at a Family Fun Day. How and what you start with is up to you.