**Title**: Effect of a Legislative Advocacy Program Among Parents of Individuals with Disabilities: A Randomized Controlled Trial

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**Introduction**: Although the importance of parent input to inform legislative changes for the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is directly enshrined within the statute, parent participation has remained limited throughout past reauthorizations (York, 2005). Given that an IDEA reauthorization is long overdue, it is critical to develop and test interventions to improve parent legislative advocacy. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of a legislative advocacy program among parents of individuals with disabilities.

**Method**: With 45 parents of individuals with disabilities, we conducted a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to determine the efficacy of an advocacy program. Inclusionary criteria required participants to be: parents of individuals with disabilities, interested in an advocacy program, and willing to complete the research measures. On average, participants were 44.70 (SD = 8.22) years of age. Most participants were mothers. Over 40% of the sample reflected racial/ethnic minority backgrounds. The individuals with disabilities were, on average, 11.20 (SD = 4.23) years of age. The most common type of disability was autism. There were no significant demographic differences between the intervention and waitlist-control groups. To determine if there was a change in special education knowledge (Burke et al., 2016), empowerment (Koren et al., 1992), motivation (Perry et al., 1992), civic engagement (Jackson-Elmore et al., 2001), and advocacy activities (Li et al., in press) across baseline, post-, and follow-up intervention, we fitted a series of linear regression model with multiple imputation.

**Results**: Special education knowledge (β = 1.97, p < .01) demonstrated a significant improvement from baseline to post survey for the intervention (not the waitlist control) group (F = 10.62, p < .001), explaining 25% of the variance in the model. Further, positive increasing trends were revealed in regard to motivation from baseline to post survey along with civic engagement and advocacy activities from post to follow-up surveys for the intervention but not the waitlist control group.

**Discussion:** The program was effective in significantly increasing special education knowledge for parents of individuals with disabilities. These results expand on prior studies, confirming the effect of advocacy programs in increasing participants’ knowledge (e.g., Burke et al., 2016; Burke et al., 2022). The emerging positive trends for proximal effects relating to motivation and distal effects for civic engagement and advocacy activities are also promising areas to explore in future studies with larger samples. Overall, the findings reinforce the benefits of expanding legislative advocacy programs as it could help parent provide feedback in the next IDEA reauthorization.

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