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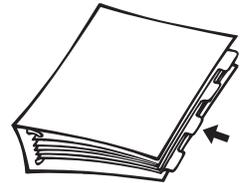
Number 360



Parents, Be Prepared For Your IEP Meeting

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At the beginning and/or ending of each school year, parents of students with an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) receive an invitation to meet with the school's IEP team to discuss evaluations, assessments, and a plan of action to support their child's academic needs. These meetings can be overwhelming and stressful, especially if the child is having difficulty meeting his/her goals or expectations. There is only a short period of time allotted for these meetings, so parents must be prepared to ask questions, voice concerns, and contribute helpful information in order to make the best use of this time. Once a meeting is over, it is hard to have everyone reconvene because you may have "forgotten to mention" something, ask questions, or challenge specific items on the IEP, etc.



The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) suggests the following tips to help parents prepare ahead of time in order to have a productive and positive IEP meeting.

Prior to the Meeting

Schedule a visit to your child's classroom if he/she is in elementary school. Observe your child's performance, routines, conditions of the classroom, and instructional materials. Your presence will be a distraction to your child and others, so make your visit short.

Compile Your Child's Records in a Notebook

Include the current IEP, progress reports, report cards, recent work samples, performance scores on district/state assessments and/or alternate assessments, results of recent evaluations by school personnel or a private institution, and any communications or records collected or maintained by the school relating to your child. Review all documents thoroughly before the meeting.

Parents receive an invitation to an IEP meeting at least 10 days in advance including the time, date, place, and purpose of the meeting, as well as a list of the IEP team members that will attend. ***Please be courteous and promptly respond to the invitation if you plan to attend or need to reschedule!*** There is an insane amount of paperwork and juggling to get an IEP team together outside the scheduled time. ***Not showing up or cancelling at the last minute may cause delays in providing needed services for your child.***

The Day of the Meeting

Arrive early with your notebook and questions. Once the mediator calls the meeting to order, ask everyone to introduce themselves and explain their role in the meeting. You may bring professionals with you to the meeting, but you should let the school know who will be attending. Introduce anyone you bring and explain their role in relationship to the child. To keep the meeting focused, your guests should only include an interpreter, tutor, special education advocate, therapist, or someone taking part in helping your child reach his/her academic/behavioral goals. Bringing small children or other relatives to a meeting is distracting and counterproductive. Take notes if you can, or ask a member of the IEP team (or your guest) to help you. Listen to the mediator as he/she presents the contents of the IEP as well as the contributions of the other team members.

Sometimes these meetings can be stressful and emotional. Remain calm, respectful, cooperative, and positive. ***Everyone*** attending this meeting wants the best for your child. Do not let your emotions get in the way of having a productive dialogue about your child.

You will have an opportunity during the meeting to address the IEP team. This is the time to ask questions and voice concerns or praise about your child's progress. Parents may submit questions and

concerns to members of the team in written form **before** the scheduled meeting. This gives the other team members time to review and collect any information needed to discuss specifics.



Share with the Team Members

Share your feelings/observations about your child's progress (or lack thereof) academically, socially, behaviorally, and functionally. Provide work samples/reports that support your concerns; strategies that may not be working at school or at home; ideas regarding academic or behavior plans; technology that could support your child academically and socially; and (if your child is in high school) the need for a transition plan regarding a college/vocational school/ career choice.

Complete All IEP Components

For the IEP to be complete, all members of the IEP team, including the parents, must be in agreement with the goals, services, accommodations, and modifications that the child qualifies to receive.

Finalizing the IEP

Parents may be asked to initial dozens of articles or amendments to the IEP before providing a final signature. **BE ABSOLUTELY SURE** you understand what you are signing or initialing. Parents do not have to sign the IEP at this meeting. Parents have the right to review the IEP at home and then sign it. Parents also have an absolute right to disagree with the IEP. If you have objections to all or **any** part of the IEP, notify the school in writing. Explain the reasons for your objections and attach your concerns to the IEP. *Even if you disagree with the IEP, go ahead and sign it, but make a note below or to the side of your name saying that your signature does not mean that you agree with the proposed IEP due to the reasons attached to the IEP document.*

After the Meeting

Explain to your child any changes made to the current IEP, reasons for the changes, and/or any new placement that may occur. Be positive in your explanation. If your child sees and feels your positivity and excitement and knows what to expect, it will help curb the anxiety of change and make any transition go more smoothly.

Monitor your child's progress frequently. Stay in touch with your child's teacher(s) by email or with a short note. Simple and frequent communication will help you stay abreast of what is happening in school with/for your child.

All IEPs go through a thorough review at least once a year. If student progress is slow or other issues become a problem, be courteous, and give the school at least 10 days written notice to reconvene all other members of the IEP team to address your concerns.

Resources

Wrightslaw (2012). *Preparing for IEP Meetings: How to Provide Information & Share Concerns*. Retrieved from <http://www.wrightslaw.com/howey/iep.mtgs.info.concern.htm>

National Center for Learning Disabilities. (2012). *IEP Meeting Planner*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncl.org/images/stories/Publications/Forms-Checklists-Flyers-Handouts/iepmeetingplanner.pdf>

More FREE Handy Handouts®, go to www.handyhandouts.com.

Helpful Products

The list of Super Duper® products below may be helpful when working with children who have special needs. Visit www.superduperinc.com and type in the item name or number in our search engine. Click the links below to see the product descriptions.

Making a Difference in America's Children
2nd Edition
[Item #TP-29703](#)

Autism - A Guide for Educators, Clinicians, and Parents
[Item #TP-297](#)

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