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IEP Meeting Tips for Parents

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IEP meetings can be daunting for parents who are new to the process, as well as those who are familiar with it. Meetings may take several hours, there are a lot of people present, lots of data will be discussed, and quite frankly, it can be hard to hear about your child's struggles and deficits, though those shouldn't be the only things discussed. Read below for some tips and tricks to make the most of your child's IEP meeting.



- **First, attend the meeting.** Parental attendance and participation are absolutely crucial in the IEP process. Work with your child's case manager to schedule a mutually agreeable time for everyone, including the parent(s), to attend. If you cannot physically attend, ask if you can attend virtually and/or over the phone. Parents are an integral part of the IEP team and should absolutely be present if possible.



- If you are not able to attend, please do share your concerns and commentary with the case manager, so it can be included in the IEP and discussed at the meeting.



- The IEP meeting notice will include a list of everyone invited – teachers, service providers (such as SLPs and occupational or physical therapists), and possibly administrators. Make sure the list includes everyone you want present, and reach out to the case manager if you'd like to request an additional party. If you are bringing anyone along, such as a family member, friend or advocate, you must let the case manager know ahead of time so they can prepare for their attendance as well.



- Prior to the meeting, feel free to request any reports on your child and a draft IEP to review. A draft IEP may not be complete, but don't worry – at the meeting, the IEP will be finalized.



- Come to the meeting prepared with information about your child – information on any medications they take (the name, the dosage, how long they take it, why they take it, when they take it, etc.),

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notes from any private therapists or tutors they see, and your own observations about your child at home (what strategies do you use at home that work, what are your child's preferred reinforcers, etc.). All of this is useful and necessary information to create a strong IEP that will pinpoint your child's strengths, weaknesses, and needs.



- Please come with your own questions, and ask them. Teachers, service providers, and administrators know how complex special education is and are ready and willing to answer any and all questions. A lot of information will be shared, but please ask questions, especially about tests and data. Don't let the use of jargon stop you from asking for explanations.



- IEPs are "living" documents. They grow and adjust with students. Parents, or anyone else on the IEP team, may request an IEP meeting to review or amend the IEP at any time. Feel confident that the document can be amended later if changes need to be made.



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Resources:

- <https://www.care.com/c/iep-meeting-checklist-for-parents/>
- <https://www.smartkidswithld.org/getting-help/the-abc-of-ieps/iep-meeting-6-tips-parents/>

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