

IEPs: Tips for a Successful Meeting

Center for Autism and Related Disabilities

University of Florida/Gainesville

IEP Training Series

Part 5 of 5

Audience

- The content presented in this series is intended to benefit parents of students with disabilities who are eligible for services and an IEP under IDEA.
- However, all interested parties, including family members, educators, related service professionals, and school administrators are welcome and encouraged to participate in this series.

What we will cover today

- The purpose of this presentation is to share tips on how to have a successful meeting. You will learn:
 - **1. how to prepare before the IEP meeting**
 - **2. how to participate most effectively in the IEP meeting**
 - **3. how to continue to be involved after the IEP meeting**

Learning objectives

- Name three strategies for keeping the IEP meeting child-focused
- Name two "to-do's" for before the IEP meeting
- Name two ways to be involved after the IEP meeting

Before the meeting

- The school will let you know there is a meeting being planned. The school must let you know in writing.
- You will be sent a copy of the Procedural Safeguards: an explanation of your rights as the parent of a child with a disability.
- If you cannot go to the meeting, **LET THE SCHOOL KNOW**. The meeting will be rescheduled to a different day, time, or place when you and the rest of the IEP team can attend.

More... before the IEP Meeting

- Look over last year's IEP
- Write down any questions or requests for information that you have
- Don't be afraid to ask someone to clarify, especially to explain an acronym
- Make copies of any documents (evals, etc.) that you want to distribute to the team
- Consider creating an All About Me book about your child
- Talk to other parents about their IEP experiences
- Ask CARD to help you prepare

More... before

- Have your talking points ready
 - **Strengths and needs**
 - **Priorities**
 - **Accommodations and modifications**
- Don't be afraid to request draft objectives to review before the meeting
- You can invite anyone you want to the meeting; it is customary to inform the team beforehand
 - **Consider asking a friend, parent, advocate, or CARD representative to attend with you (and take notes for you)**

During the meeting

- Request time to review and celebrate your child's skills and strengths; encourage the team to use this information for planning ways to address new behaviors/skills
- Keep the focus on your child
 - **Bring a picture (and food!)**
 - **Ask everyone to talk about something good your child has achieved**
 - **Talk about "what works" for your child (now and in the past)**
- You can tape record the meeting, but you must alert team in advance that you will be doing so
- Feel free to say you want to take documents home and read through them before you sign

More... during the Meeting

- There is no magic number of objectives- each should be written so that it is *masterable* within one school year, not just *addressed* during that time
- The goal is to strike a balance between asking for too much and too little
- Objectives should have the opportunity to be addressed throughout the school day and at home, not just during speech, art, etc.
- Objectives should be the "next steps" based on the PLOPs (present levels of performance)

More... during

- If your child is having his/her first IEP, you will be asked to give written consent for placement.
- If you are having an IEP Review Meeting, the team will talk about what supports and services were effective, how goals need to be changed.

More... during

- You are free to disagree with the IEP.
- Signing the IEP does NOT mean you are agreeing to everything; it just means you were at the meeting.
- You can choose to have it written in the IEP that you were in disagreement.
- If you continue to disagree with parts of the IEP, you may:
 - Ask for another IEP meeting
 - Ask for more evaluations
 - Talk with the school principal or ESE administrator
 - Request free mediation services to help you and the school solve your differences
 - Ask for a due process hearing. The school may also request this

After the meeting

- The school will give you a copy of the IEP.
- If you think the IEP is not finished, ask for another meeting.
- Keep a copy of the IEP for your records.
- Prepare your child for any changes that might affect his/her day to day schooling
- Communicate with your school team about how you can work on targeted skills at home.

More...after the IEP Meeting

- IEPs can be written for less than 1 year but not for more than 1 year
- IEP meetings can take place more than 1 time per year and by parent request; a meeting must be held any time a change of any kind is made to the IEP
- The team should meet again if the goals are not being addressed, not being met, or being met to quickly
- Re-evals must take place every three years
- You are not just there to sign the papers; you are the expert, and your expertise about your child can help the team implement the IEP and problem-solve

Being a member of a team

- Participate
- Share information
- Communicate
- Let people know if you don't understand or have a concern, but don't forget to acknowledge the good!
- Request clarification
- Compromise
- Be helpful when making suggestions

Top Ten Teambuilding Tips

<http://www.schwablearning.org/articles.aspx?r=802>

- Help the teacher get to know your child
- Be collaborative
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Be even-tempered
- Put it in writing

Team building, cont.

- Join forces to help your child get organized
- Participate in your child's classroom or school
- Sweeten the relationship
- Stretch the teacher's awareness of your child's unique learning challenges
- Know your rights and responsibilities

Resources

- Teach Me Language

- Advanced academic and social goals
- Focus on abstract concepts

- The Syracuse Curriculum Guide

- Scope and sequence: kindergarten through age 21

Test your knowledge... True or false

- An IEP is a document that lasts only for one year; therefore only an annual meeting is allowed
- Parents may not bring anyone to the meeting without written consent from the school
- Parents must sign the IEP, even if they don't agree, so that the meeting can be adjourned
- It is OK for the school team to present the parents with an IEP at the meeting
- The student him/herself is not allowed to attend
- IEPs can only address academic skills
- Only one goal is allowed per domain area

More resources

- Autism Society of America: http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?pagename=life_educational_iep
- COACH: Choosing Outcomes and Accommodations for Children by Michael Giangreco, Chigee Coninger, and Virginia Iverson (1998). Paul Brookes Publishing Co.
- Accommodations and Modifications: What Parents Need to Know? Call (850) 245-0477 or go to <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/ac-mod-parents.pdf>
http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu/online_training.asp

More resources

- More information on Rights and Advocacy:
<http://www.wrightslaw.com/>
- More information on Transition IEPs:
<http://www.thetransitioncenter.org/resources.htm>
- For a transition IEP checklist for middle/high school level, see this book: *Asperger Syndrome and Adolescence: Practical Solutions for School Success* by Brenda Smith Myles and Diane Adreon.

More resources

- An Introduction to Exceptional Student Education: For Parents of Florida's Students with Disabilities
<http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/pis3412a.pdf>
- Getting Ready for Your Child's IEP Meeting pamphlet
<http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/iep-card.pdf>
- These documents and many others are FREE and available through the Florida Department of Education. Call 850-245-0477 or
<http://www.fldoe.org/ese>