

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting Checklist

WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)?

Children with disabilities, including learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), mental disorders, mental retardation, and pervasive developmental disorders, may be eligible for special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is required by IDEA for each eligible child. The IEP specifies the services needed to fulfill the child's right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). An eligible child who has a disability and needs special education is entitled to the services set forth in the IEP.

The IEP is a written plan describing the special education and related services designed to meet the unique educational needs of a student with a disability. It contains goals and objectives based on the student's present levels of educational performance, specifies the educational placement and setting, and describes the related services and supports necessary for the student to benefit from the special education program. A team composed of professionals, the child's parents, and the child (where appropriate) meet to develop the IEP. The IEP team must discuss the following specific information about the child, including the child's strengths, the parents' ideas for enhancing the child's education, the results of recent evaluations or reevaluations, and how the child has done on state and districtwide tests.

BEFORE THE IEP MEETING

1. Obtain and study all school records including private assessments, medical records, and so forth. Obtain copies of the following:
 - Prior IEPs (if any)
 - Progress notes, report cards, teachers' notes, work samples, and so forth
 - A draft copy of the new IEP if it has been developed
2. Talk with people who have worked with or evaluated your child to see how they think your child is progressing.
3. Inform your child's health professionals that you are preparing for an IEP meeting. Talk to them about issues they feel should be discussed, the services they feel your



child needs, and goals that are appropriate for your child. Ask them to submit written statements. You might also ask if they can attend the meeting or contact the school by phone.

4. Familiarize yourself with IDEA and the rules and regulations regarding the IEP process. See the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP>) and the IDEA '97 (<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/IDEA>) Web sites for more information.
5. Review the present IEP (if there is one) to see if you think the goals have been met. If this is a first IEP, obtain a copy of a sample IEP form.
6. Make a list of your child's present level of functioning based on your observations. Include an assessment of your child's skills in the following areas:
 - Academic (specify if skills vary by subject)
 - Developmental (if pre-academic)
 - Motor
 - Speech/language
 - Social
 - Self-help
 - Prevocational and vocational
 - Other
7. Consider making an appointment with your child's teacher to observe your child in the classroom.
8. Make a list of goals for your child, and consider how these goals can best be met.
9. List services your child may need, including:
 - Special education services and related services (e.g., transportation, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology services, parent counseling and training, psychological services)
 - Transition services
 - Special considerations needed in the regular classroom and for homework
10. If you have questions to be resolved or issues of concern for one or two members of the IEP team or individu-

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als who will have input into the IEP, try to work them out before the IEP meeting. You should maintain an ongoing dialogue with your child's teacher and open communication all year long so issues can be resolved as they arise.

11. Arrange for someone to attend the meeting with you, if you like.
12. You are allowed to tape the meeting. Many parents find this helpful for future reference. If you plan to tape the meeting, it can be helpful to politely notify the school in advance that you are going to do so.

DURING THE IEP MEETING

1. Remember that you are an equal member of the IEP team.
2. Ask to review the current IEP (if there is one). Talk about which teaching methods and materials worked and which did not. Discuss what approaches you feel will assist your child in learning.
3. Be sure you understand the words used in the IEP and in the meeting, all the test results, and any new goals that are suggested. Compare the school's goals with your goals. Ask for clarification if you need to, and ask about the implications of what is said in the meeting. Take notes, and read back your notes to other members of the IEP team on any critical issues to ensure mutual understanding.
4. Be prepared to listen to others' points of view, and be sure your views are heard. Be assertive, but stay calm.
5. Remember that services are based on individual need, not availability. If needed services are not available, be sure that this is stated on the IEP form, as well as when the services will be made available. Services and assistive technology must be provided even if not currently available in your child's school. Remember that services must be provided in the least restrictive setting appropriate for your child.
6. Discuss the amount of special education and regular education your child requires.
7. Write the IEP with goals that you understand and that a teacher and other staff can use to measure progress. How progress will be measured should be clearly stated in the IEP.
8. The IEP should include any accommodations and changes to your child's regular education classes that may be needed, including both physical and academic accom-

modations (e.g., assistive technology, homework and testing accommodations).

AT THE END OF THE IEP MEETING

1. Make sure that all blanks and spaces in the IEP form are filled in.
2. Make sure that all the related services and the duration and amount that your child needs of each are listed.
3. Make sure the amount of time your child will spend in regular education is listed.
4. The law ensures a process for resolving differences. If you cannot come to an agreement, you may request another meeting. Do not feel pressured to make a decision immediately. You may write on the IEP form that you do not agree, or identify the portions with which you do not agree. You might wish to initial those areas with which you agree and request a 30-day interim IEP. If you feel it is necessary, you can also ask for mediation, request due process, or file a written complaint with the state education agency.

AFTER THE IEP MEETING

1. Ask for a copy of the IEP meeting minutes, and send back a copy of any corrections.
2. Obtain a copy of the IEP for your records.
3. Share a copy of the IEP with your child's health professionals.
4. Observe your child's program to ensure that your child receives the services contained in the IEP and that the school is working actively toward achieving the IEP goals. The school is required to report on your child's progress as often as nondisabled children receive progress reports.
5. Remember that you can ask for a review of your child's IEP at any time during the school year.

WHAT IS MY CHILD'S ROLE IN THE IEP PROCESS?

Your child should be involved in developing the IEP as appropriate. Involving the student can help increase his skills in self-advocacy, such as learning to discuss his strengths and weaknesses and any strategies and supports that may be needed. This will lead to increased independence and self-esteem. However, if the process is contentious, it may be best for your child not to be present.

Sources: Fairfax County Public Schools. 1998. *Questions and Answers for Parents Prior to an IEP Meeting*. Fairfax, VA: Fairfax County Public Schools.

IEP Meeting Checklist for Parents. Source unknown.

Learning Disabilities Association. 1997. *How to Participate Effectively in the IEP Process*. Pittsburgh, PA: Learning Disabilities Association.