

Attending Meetings to Plan Your Child's Individualized Education Program (IEP): Some Suggestions to Consider



ALL-8

Before the IEP team meeting:

- Consider the vision you have for your child for the future as well as for the next school year.
- List your child's strengths, needs, and interests and your major concerns about his or her education.
- Consider how your child's disability affects his or her education.
- Think about your child's educational progress. What has been working and what has not?
- Request a written copy of your child's evaluation results or a meeting with school staff to discuss the evaluation before the IEP meeting. This gives you an opportunity to understand the evaluation before the IEP team meeting for your child.
- Consider the evaluation results. Do these results fit with what you know about your child? Is the evaluation complete and accurate? If you disagree with the school's evaluation, you may request, in writing, an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at no cost to you. The school must pay for the evaluation or show the due process hearing officer that its evaluation is appropriate. The results of an IEE must be considered by the IEP team in planning your child's IEP.
- Consider a variety of ways to involve your child in developing his or her IEP, starting at a young age if appropriate. Self-advocacy skills are important to develop.
- If needed, plan to bring someone with you to the meeting with knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, such as a spouse, relative, friend, related service personnel or representative from a local disability organization.

At the IEP team meeting:

The IEP meeting is very important. You, the school personnel, and other IEP team members attending the meeting will review and discuss information about your child to develop the IEP. It provides an excellent opportunity to ask questions and share important insights about your child, whom you know better than anyone else does. The school needs to know what your child is like at home and in the community, as well as what your child's interests and activities are.

- Make sure others at the IEP meeting never forget that the meeting is about a real child – your child.
- Share your visions for your child, both short-term and long-term.
- Discuss your child's strengths and needs and any concerns about your child's education.
- Remember that diagnostic tests and assessments do not present the total picture.
- When you believe that the teacher and school personnel are doing a good job, tell them so. Praise, when deserved, is a great thing.
- Be a good listener. Ask questions.
- Make sure you understand. If you don't understand something, ask to have it explained in a way that you can understand.
- Expect that what you know about your child will be used in making decisions.

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- Use school data, your child's progress reports, and other information you know about your child to make decisions.
 - You may not want to agree to a proposed IEP at the end of the meeting. Review the proposed IEP document at home. If you disagree with what is being proposed in the IEP document, you must notify the school as soon as possible to resolve the disagreement.

After the IEP team meeting:

- Your child's IEP must be reviewed at least once a year to determine whether the annual goals have been achieved and to revise the IEP if necessary.
- Your child's school must inform you regularly about your child's progress, at least as often as parents who have children without disabilities are informed about the progress their children are making. Schools can do this by providing periodic report cards. You will be informed about whether your child is making progress toward meeting the annual IEP goals, and whether the progress is enough to reach the goals. If your child is not making adequate progress, an IEP meeting should be held to review the IEP and make needed changes.
- You may request an IEP meeting at any time during the year if you believe it is important to consider changes in your child's IEP.