

QUICK REFERENCE

Words & Timelines
You'll Hear

- IDEA — Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- IEP — Individualized Education Program
- 504 — Section 504 plan (accommodations under the Rehabilitation Act)
- FAPE — Free Appropriate Public Education
- LRE — Least Restrictive Environment
- PLAAFP — Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance
- SDI — Specially Designed Instruction
- PWN — Prior Written Notice (the school's written explanation)
- IEE — Independent Educational Evaluation
- ESY — Extended School Year
- FBA — Functional Behavioral Assessment
- BIP — Behavior Intervention Plan
- MDR — Manifestation Determination Review
- MTSS / RtI — Multi-Tiered System of Supports / Response to Intervention
- LEA — Local Education Agency (your school district)
- ISBE — Illinois State Board of Education
- OT / PT — Occupational Therapy / Physical Therapy
- SLP — Speech-Language Pathologist
- AT — Assistive Technology
- EI / ECSE — Early Intervention (0-3) and Early Childhood (3-5)
- ESP — Educational Surrogate Parent

Illinois timelines worth knowing

- 14 sd School days for the district to decide whether an evaluation is warranted, after your written request
- 60 sd School days from your signed consent to the eligibility decision and the initial IEP meeting
- 10 d Days of written notice before a meeting, and to answer your written request for one
- 3 sd School days before the meeting to receive the written materials the team will consider
- 14½ Transition planning starts with the IEP in effect when your child turns 14½
- 18 Educational rights transfer to the student; the IEP gives notice at 17

sd = school days. If fewer than 60 school days remain when you consent, eligibility must be decided before the next school year begins. Materials sent before a review include the draft IEP, but not proposed minutes or placement.

Sources: 23 IAC Part 226; 105 ILCS 5/14-8.02 and 14-8.03



You don't have to do this alone

Family Matters is Illinois' statewide Parent Training and Information Center. Since 2002 we have helped families understand special education and take part in it with confidence. Our services are free.

Before your next meeting, we can help you:

- Read and make sense of an evaluation, IEP, or 504 plan
- Decide what to ask, and practice saying it out loud
- Understand your rights and the school's timelines
- Write a parent input statement or a request letter
- Find a training, workshop, or online course that fits

Bilingual staff and interpretation are available — just ask.

www.fmptic.org

Toll free: 1-866-4FMPTIC | Serving families of students and young adults with disabilities, ages 0-26, across Illinois.

Notes from today's meeting

Who is following up, and by when?

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A QUICK GUIDE FOR ILLINOIS FAMILIES

Your Seat
at the Table

Getting ready for — and speaking up in — your child's IEP or 504 meeting.

Bring this with you. The inside pages are built to be opened at the table: what happens when, what to ask, and how to keep the conversation working.

STEP ONE

Before the Meeting

A little preparation changes how the whole hour goes.

How the meeting usually goes

- 1 Introductions, purpose of the meeting, and how long the team has scheduled
- 2 Evaluations and data are reviewed (initial or reevaluation)
- 3 **Present levels** — your child's strengths, needs, and how the disability affects the school day
- 4 **Goals** for the coming year, and how progress will be measured
- 5 **Services, minutes, accommodations**, and supports for staff
- 6 **Placement** — where services happen, and time with peers without disabilities
- 7 Wrap-up: what was decided, what wasn't, signatures, next steps

Who is at the table

You, a general and a special education teacher, someone who can explain the evaluation results, a district representative, related service providers as needed, your child (required at 14½), and anyone you bring with you.

Getting ready

- Ask for the draft and all written materials — in Illinois these come to you at least **3 school days** ahead. Read them with a highlighter.
- Write down three things going well and three worries.
- Bring a one-page picture of your child: who they are, what works, what doesn't.
- Gather work samples, notes, dates, outside evaluations, and medical or therapy reports.
- Request an interpreter ahead of time if that helps you take part.
- Ask for extra time, or a second date, if the agenda looks longer than the hour.
- Bring a support person to listen and take notes while you talk.

Say it early

At the start, it is fair to say: *"Here's what I most want to make sure we cover today."* Naming your priority early makes it far more likely the team gets to it.

STEP TWO

Questions to Ask, Moment by Moment

Open to this page at the table, and pick the few that matter most.

When the team describes my child

- ? What does your data show about strengths, not only needs?
- ? How does my child's disability affect the school day?
- ? What does that look like on a hard day?

When goals are written

- ? Where is my child now, and where should they be in a year?
- ? How will progress be measured, and how often will I hear?
- ? What happens if we get to spring and the goal isn't being met?

When services and minutes are decided

- ? What service, how many minutes, how often, and who provides it?
- ? In the classroom or outside it — and what led the team there?
- ? What happens on days the provider is absent?

When accommodations come up

- ? Who is responsible for making sure each one actually happens?
- ? How will every teacher know what my child needs?
- ? How will we know whether it's working?

When placement is discussed

- ? What was tried to keep my child in the general classroom?
- ? What would need to change for more time with peers?
- ? What does my child's day actually look like, hour by hour?

Before we close

- ? Can we read back what we agreed to today?
- ? What is *not* being included, and why? May I have that in writing?
- ? What are the next steps, the dates, and who follows up with me?
- ? Who do I contact if something isn't happening?

If this is a 504 meeting

- ? Which accommodations are written down, and who gets a copy?
- ? How often is it reviewed, and who checks that it's followed?
- ? Does my child need instruction taught differently, not only accommodations? If so, should we consider an IEP evaluation?

STEP THREE

Partnering with the School Team

You are a required member of this team, and you know your child best.

Skills that build partnership

- **Lead with your child.** A photo and a one-page description change the tone of a room.
- **Bring specifics.** Dates, work samples, and notes carry further than frustration alone.
- **Ask before you disagree.** "Help me understand how the team got there" opens more doors than "no."
- **Slow it down.** It is fine to say, "Can we pause on that one?"
- **Use a parking lot.** Park topics that need their own meeting instead of losing the agenda.
- **Put requests in writing** and keep everything in one dated folder.
- **Assume good intent** — and still ask for the detail.

Phrases that keep the door open

- "Can you say that in plain words for me?"
- "What would that look like on a Tuesday?"
- "What options did the team consider?"
- "Would you add that to the notes?"
- "I'm not ready to decide today. Can we come back to that?"

If you are not in agreement

You do not have to agree the same day. Signing the attendance sheet is not the same as agreeing. You can:

- Ask the team to reconvene on another date
- Add a written parent statement to the IEP
- Ask for Prior Written Notice explaining what the district decided
- Read your Procedural Safeguards, which describe options including mediation, a State complaint, and due process

Not sure which fits? Call us — we will walk through the options with you.

After the meeting

- Read the final document and compare it to your notes
- Send a short email restating what you understood was decided
- Watch for the plan to start — in Illinois, generally within 10 school days of notice — and keep everything dated in one folder