

CHAPTER 7. PREPARING FOR AND PARTICIPATING IN THE IEP TEAM MEETING

What is an Individualized Education Program?

If the IEP team - the participants in the IEP meeting - determine that a child has a disability covered under special education law and would benefit from special education services, the team develops an Individualized Education Program. The IEP is not to be developed prior to the initial IEP team meeting or without the participation of the child's parents. However, staff may prepare a draft of proposed goals and objectives to be discussed, amended, and approved by the IEP team. The IEP is a written document that describes what the child's needs are and what services will best meet those needs.



The IEP may be considered an educational blueprint. It describes the child's skills and needs, outlines a plan of specially designed instruction to take advantage of those skills and respond to those needs, and establishes educational goals and objectives or benchmarks to be achieved during the next year. The plan is to be reviewed each year and more often if parents or teachers request it. The IEP is an agreement by the school to provide specific services; however, it does not guarantee specific outcomes.

What is the IEP team meeting?

When the assessment has been completed, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meeting will be held. The parent will receive written notification as to when and where this meeting will take place. The IEP team meeting is very important. If you cannot attend at the time suggested, call the IEP chairperson immediately to arrange a time that is mutually convenient for you and the school and discuss other meeting options, such as participating by phone.

Who participates on the IEP team?

The IEP team consists of at least four persons: the parent(s), the administrator or his/her designee, at least one of the child's general education teachers, a special education teacher and others familiar with the assessments of your child and his/her needs, such as, a speech/language specialist, the school psychologist, therapist, counselor, translator, etc. The student may attend when appropriate and should attend when his/her Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) is being designed and reviewed. As of July 1, 2005, IEP team members may be excused from attending the meeting if their area of focus will not be discussed or if they have submitted a report in writing and the parent and district consent in writing to excuse their attendance.

What will happen at the IEP team meeting?

You will have the opportunity to participate as an active member of the IEP team by:

- Listening to others' information* regarding your child;
- Sharing your own information about your child;
- Sharing your thoughts and concerns;
- Participating in decisions regarding your child's education.

* The IEP team members will share with you the results of the assessment, observation of your child's performance at school, and other factors that the team members consider important.



What is my role in the IEP team?

Parents are to participate as full and equal members of the IEP team. They bring vital information to the IEP meeting, because they know their children in a way no one else does.

Parents should not hesitate to ask other team members to repeat information, to offer additional explanation, or to define terms in everyday language, nor should they hesitate to suggest the kinds of interventions they believe their child needs and to raise questions about suggestions made by other team members.

What decisions will be made at the IEP team meeting?

The IEP team determines whether the child is eligible for services based upon his/her needs and federal and state criteria for eligibility. If the child is eligible, an IEP will be developed and written with input provided by the team. Parent participation is very important in the entire process.

You will be asked to give written approval of the Individualized Education Program at the IEP meeting. A system to measure your child's progress will be developed and reviewed yearly. Your written permission is required when a change in educational placement or program is proposed. For instances where only partial agreement is reached, only those goals and objectives, programs, and services to which you agree will be implemented.

A student's IEP is a cooperative effort among the school, the home, and the student. Communication between home and school should be continued even after the formal conferences and meetings take place. Requests for informal conferences with the teachers, requests to visit the classroom, notes, or phone calls are all ways that parents can use to learn about their child's program and performance as well as contribute important information and suggestions to staff who work with their child.

IEP's may be amended by either:

1. an IEP team at an IEP team meeting **or**
2. in a written agreement to amend the IEP that is signed by both the parent and the district representative.

When a child is found to be eligible for special education services, the IEP will contain:

- **A description of the student's present levels of educational performance in each area of suspected disability:**

The statements should be in narrative form with descriptions based on the assessments of what the child can and cannot do, that is, of skills the child has mastered and what he or she needs to learn next. The skills described should include academics, social behavior, language development, self-help skills, motor development, and prevocational/vocational skills, as appropriate to the child's age and disability.

- **A statement of annual educational goals, including for children who have significant cognitive disabilities, short-term educational objectives:**

This statement will list - in priority order and in a positive, action-oriented way - skills and/or behaviors that the child and his or her teachers will be striving to develop during the next year. Categories of skills parents might expect to be listed are academic skills (for example, reading, writing, spelling, math); social skills (for example, getting along with others, following rules, etc.); self-help skills (for example, asking for help, working independently, etc.); motor skills (for example, handwriting skills, P.E. skills, etc.); and prevocational/vocational skills (for example, following directions, completing jobs, using tools), depending on the child's age and disability. For each goal listed, the steps that must be taken to reach the goal will be described in the objectives that follow. For students whose primary language is other than English, linguistically appropriate goals, objectives, programs and services are included.



- **A description of the necessary special education instruction and related services:**
This description specifies services that will be provided to meet the child's learning needs, for example, speech/language services, assistive technology, adaptive physical education or vocational education. It will specify the type of program or class in which the child will be placed, for example, general education classroom with special assistance, part-time services, or full-time special class placement. Persons responsible for providing the services will be listed, for example, resource specialist or adaptive physical education teacher.

Extended school year:

If the IEP team determines that the child needs extended school year services (ESY), that is, services that go beyond the average school year, those services will be listed on the placement page. Extended school year services are appropriate when it is clear that interrupting the child's educational program - for example, for summer vacation - will likely cause the child a loss in acquired knowledge or skills or will make it unlikely that the child will maintain the knowledge or skills targeted on the IEP as short-term instructional objectives.

- **A statement will be made describing the extent to which the child will participate in regular education programs:**
As well as a statement describing those areas in which he/she will receive special education instruction: these statements should indicate both the academic and nonacademic general education programs in which their child will participate with his or her non-disabled peers and will describe any modifications or accommodations that may be necessary in general education programs to facilitate the child's participation.



- **The projected date for beginning the programs and services** is described and the anticipated duration of the programs and services as well as the date on which the IEP will be reviewed is listed.
- **A description of how the child's progress** toward meeting the annual goals will be measured.

- **When periodic reports on the progress** the child is making toward meeting the annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards) will be provided.
- **The extent of the child's participation in the state and district standardized assessment program** with or without accommodations. If he/she will not be participating, a statement describing alternate assessment procedures must be included.
- **Behavioral goals and objectives and/or a behavioral plan** if the child's inability to follow classroom and school rules is interfering with his/her educational program.
- **At age 16, transition services language** regarding career exploration, vocational education, etc.
- **Proficiency Standards:**
IEPs for students in grades 7 through 12 should include any alternative means necessary for the students to complete the school district's course of study and to meet or exceed the district's proficiency standards for graduation. If an IEP team determines that a student has not demonstrated the ability to attain the district's regular proficiency standards with appropriate educational services and support, the team, in accordance with district procedure, is to develop differential proficiency standards appropriate to the student's needs and potential and to include them as part of the student's IEP.
- **IEP team members recognize**, as state law does, that there may be some students who cannot meet regular or differential standards of proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematical skills and will be working toward a Letter of Completion rather than a diploma.
- **Educational rights** will transfer to the student upon turning 18.

How do I prepare for the IEP team meeting?

Federal and state laws have established your right to participate in making decisions about your child's special education program. It is important for you to be an informed participant and advocate for your child. The most important information you contribute to the IEP is knowledge of your child. Share your knowledge as you listen to the information and observations of the other team members. Then, through a shared decision-making process an effective plan can be developed to determine placement and services to be provided.

Things to do before the meeting:

- Talk to your child about:
 - How he/she feels about school.
 - Likes/dislikes.
 - What he/she would like to improve.
- Review your child's last IEP and know what goals were worked on.
- Prepare to share information about your concerns. Make a list of any questions and bring the list to the IEP meeting. Some information that you may wish to share at the meeting could include:
 - Your child's likes and dislikes.
 - Your child's specific strengths (things he/she does well).
 - General social skills that your child needs to develop.
 - Learning strategies that work best with your child.
 - Things that motivate your child in the learning process.
 - Your child's specific limitations or problems.
 - If you feel your child is working to his/her ability.

- The kind of job or work you expect your child to be able to do after completion of schooling.
- The knowledge or skills you think your child should have to accomplish these goals.
- What you can do as a parent to help your child learn at home and support the school program.
- The kind of support you can expect from the school.
- Programs and services are available to your child from preschool through 12th grade and beyond.
- What you can do as a parent to prepare for the future.
- Extra-curricular activities or experiences that would be helpful for your child.
- As a courtesy, inform the meeting contact person if you plan to bring another person to the meeting including what expertise or knowledge he/she possesses that is necessary for the development of your child's IEP.
- Be prepared to discuss the expectations you have for your child.
 - Know your child's needs.
 - Know the kind of progress you would like to see and share it with the IEP team.
 - Share your ideas when the long-term goals and short-term objectives are developed/proposed.
- Send the school any relevant or recent information about your child that the school does not have so the school has time to review prior to the IEP meeting, (e.g., independent evaluations, medical information, etc.).
- Call your [local Community Advisory Committee representative](#) if you need information or assistance (names and phone numbers are available through your district director of special education).
- Organize your child's special education records. Large three-ring binders are handy.

Things to do during the meeting:

- Be an active team member.
- Share relevant information about your child.
- Present questions you have.
- Present your expectations for your child.
- Ask questions regarding things that are not clear.
- Request example(s) to clarify assessment information.
- Make sure your child's program includes opportunities for participation in the general education program such as: music, physical education, lunch, recess, art, and academic subjects where appropriate.
- Share any goals and objectives you may have prepared.
- Share any relevant information the school may not have (e.g., medical information, recent evaluation).
- Discuss placement after goals/objectives have been determined.
- Focus on your child's needs.
- Be sure services are based on your child's needs.



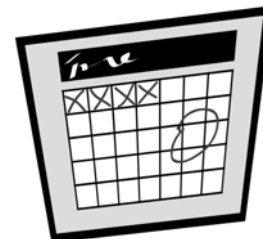
Will I receive notice of the IEP meeting?

The school must provide you with written notice of the IEP meeting within a reasonable time prior to the meeting. This notice will include: the date, time, and place of the meeting; the reason for the meeting; and who will be at the meeting. If you are unable to attend the meeting, you may call the school to reschedule. If an interpreter will be needed, please indicate that on the notification form as well, or call the director's office to ask that one be present.

When must an IEP meeting be held?

An IEP meeting must be held:

- Following an assessment to determine eligibility for special education.
- Once a year to review your child's progress and placement and to make any changes to the IEP.
- Every three years to review your child's progress and to determine whether special education programs and/or services are still required.
- After your child has received a formal assessment or reassessment.
- When you or a teacher requests a meeting to develop, review, or revise the IEP.
- To develop an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP), for students who will be turning 16 years of age.
- To determine whether a student's misconduct was a manifestation of his or her disability before suspending the student from school for more than 10 school days, or expelling the student.
- To develop a Behavior Intervention Plan following a Functional Analysis Assessment.



If your child is already enrolled in a special education program and you request an IEP meeting, you must do so in writing. Once your request is received, the meeting must be held within 30 days, not counting school vacations greater than 5 days.

Note: IEPs may now be amended without convening an IEP meeting with parental consent. This does not change the required times when IEP meetings must be held.

What programs will be considered for my child?

Decisions about placement are made at the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meeting for each child. The goal is to provide special education services in a way that can best meet the individual student's needs and does so with a minimal loss of contact with general education. Assignment to special classes, special schooling, or other removal of the individual from the general education environment shall occur only when the nature and severity of the disability is such that education in general classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Who receives a copy of the IEP?

The parents of a student for whom an IEP has been prepared are to receive a copy of the IEP. In addition, before a student is placed in a special education program, it is the responsibility of the school district to ensure that any district personnel who will provide services to the student - including regular classroom teachers, special education teachers and other persons who may provide services - are knowledgeable of the child's IEP. A copy of the IEP is to be maintained at each school site where the student is enrolled. Persons from other agencies who provide the student with special education services may receive a copy of the IEP with parent's written permission. All IEPs are to be maintained in accordance with state and federal pupil record confidentiality laws.

When will the IEP be implemented?

After the initial IEP has been developed, the school district must implement the IEP within a "reasonable period of time" as determined by the IEP team and the parents.

When are IEPs changed?

A child's IEP team is to meet at least annually, to review the child's progress and the appropriateness of the programs and services designated in the IEP. If team members determine that changes are required in order to meet the child's educational needs, they may revise the IEP.

In addition, a parent or teacher may request an IEP team meeting to review, and if necessary, revise an individualized education program. However, if changes to a child's IEP are necessary after the annual IEP meeting for a school year, the parent and the Local Education Agency (LEA), may agree not to convene to make the changes, but instead, may develop a written document to amend or modify the current IEP. Changes to the IEP may be made by the entire IEP team or, by amending the IEP as explained above rather than redrafting it in its entirety. Upon request, a parent shall be provided a revised copy of the IEP with the amendments incorporated. If a parent requests a meeting to review an IEP, the meeting must be held within 30 days of receipt of a written request, not counting days in July and August.



Finally, a reevaluation of the child is to be conducted at least every three years, and more frequently, if conditions warrant. Based on the reevaluation results, the IEP may be updated with new goals and objectives and/or the team may write transition goals in preparation for exiting the student from special education. For more information on reevaluation, refer to Chapter 9.

Things to do after the meeting:

Review the IEP.

Call the IEP meeting contact person if you have any questions or concerns.

Give your child feedback.

- Tell him/her what they have accomplished.
- Tell him/her what you expect for the following year.

What to do if you do not agree with the IEP:

The IEP team, as represented by school staff, has a responsibility to indicate on the IEP those services they will provide. However, you may find that you disagree with something that is offered.

1. If you do not consent to all the components of the IEP, initial those components to which you do consent in order that they may be implemented. This will prevent a delay in providing instruction and services to the student.
2. Sign that you attended the meeting.
3. Sign that you are not in agreement with the IEP in its entirety, marking the areas in which you disagree.
4. Those components to which you did not agree will not be implemented. The IEP meeting will be adjourned to allow both parties to work toward resolution of the issue(s).

Contact any of the following resources to assist you in resolving the disagreement:

- Your director of special education
- Your child's principal
- A district program specialist
- A SELPA program coordinator
- The SELPA Alternative Dispute Resolution Coordinator