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 goals 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 edu IEP


• 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

• Getting Ready for Your Child's IEP Meeting pamphlet

• 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