



IEP



What Parents Need to Know



What is an Individualized Education Plan?

It is a written document, ordered by a federal IDEA law, which must be designed for one student and must be a truly individualized document. The IEP defines a child's disabilities, states a child's current levels of educational performance, describes a child's educational needs, and specifies a child's annual educational goals and objectives. The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when appropriate) to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities.

Preparing for the IEP Meeting:

- Request all their child's test/assessment scores seven days prior to the scheduled IEP meeting.
- After receiving the test results the parent(s) should review them, looking at their child's current levels of educational performance, and how their child compares with other children his/her age (what the age norms are).
- Gather preparations for the coming meeting by: looking at the child's school records, preparing notes of any topics, questions, concerns, or suggestions that parents want to address during the meeting.
- Request a copy of the school district's IEP form before the IEP meeting (forms may vary per district).
- The parent should define for him/herself their child's problem areas and strengths.
- Ask the school district special education administrator for an agenda, and then if there are important items that are not on the agenda, the parent can notify the administrator, preferably in writing.
- If the parent has not done so already, start an IEP binder. An IEP binder is an organizational tool that allows parent's to keep everything in one location. Items to include are as follows:
 - The child's school records
 - Notes from the child's teacher
 - The child's work
 - Past IEP's
 - The child's health and medical records
 - Information on programs and services outside of the school district
 - Special education contacts
 - Important dates, etc.
- Prepare an IEP blueprint. These are the items that you want in the child's IEP. Some items to include are as follows:
 - Classroom setting and peer needs
 - Teacher and staff needs (experience and training of the teacher, and number of teachers and aides).
 - Curricula and teaching methodology
 - Related services (example: speech and language therapy)
 - Goals and objectives

What To Keep In Mind:

- If the parent is deaf, or their first language is not English and do not possess fluency, let the school district know in advance so they may hire an interpreter to ensure that the parent understands the IEP proceedings.
- If the child is 14 years or older the school is *required* to invite him/her to the IEP meeting, which can help them understand what is expected of them to allow them to be involved in their own planning and decision making.
- The IEP meeting must be held with the parent's consent and within 30 days of the date that the school finds their child eligible to receive special education services.
- The school must schedule the IEP meeting for not only a time that is convenient for them, but also for the parent(s).
- There is no requirement that the IEP meeting be for a specific length of time. Two or three hours is common.





Who Will Attend the IEP Meeting?



- A representative of the school district who is qualified and knowledgeable of the services and programs available, and availability of the resources of the local educational agency.
- The child's regular classroom teacher.
- The child's special education teacher, if applicable.
- The parents of the child.
- The child, when appropriate.
- A person who can interpret the assessments, if necessary.
- At the parents' discretion, other people who have knowledge or expertise regarding their child such as the school psychologist, resource specialist, school nurse, speech therapist, or physical therapist.



Attending the IEP Meeting

- The parent's should bring to the meeting their IEP binder
- Focus on their child's needs
- Ask questions
- Obtain basic information (During an IEP meeting, several technical terms will be used, such as FAPE, LRE, Wisc-R, due process, etc. Find out what these terms mean).
- Pay attention to what is written on the IEP form (the parents should make sure they know what statements are entered onto the IEP document and voice any objections).
- Do not be rushed into making a decision (request a break to go outside to think about what was offered).
- The parent should make sure that each item required for the IEP is fully discussed and addressed. These include:
 - A description of their child's present level of educational performance in all areas.
 - A statement of annual goals and a list of short-term objectives.
 - What special education and related services are to be provided to meet each of the goals and their objectives?
 - A decision is made on the extent to which their child will participate in general education programs at the school.
 - If appropriate, a statement of transition services for a student 14 years and older.
 - The projected dates for starting services and the anticipated duration of services are arranged.
 - The schedule for evaluation and determination of whether their child is achieving the short-term objectives.
 - ALL of their child's unique needs due to the disability or disabilities must be addressed, not just his/her academic needs.
 - If a service is needed for their child it must be written on the IEP document and provided by the district, or another available agency.
- By law, a signature is not required on an IEP plan, but there is probably no reason not to do so. If the parent's signature is construed as written consent, no harm results because the parents can withdraw that consent at any time.
- Before the parent signs the IEP, make sure that the document accurately and completely describes their child's present level of educational performance in all relevant developmental areas (i.e. movement, communications, social relations, self concept/independence, sense/perception, thinking, and learning style).
- Regardless of whether the parent has signed or not signed for the approval of the IEP document and it's contents. They should ALWAYS ASK FOR A COPY of the document FOR THEIR RECORDS!



After the IEP Meeting

- The child's IEP is reviewed by the IEP team at least once a year, or more often if the parents or school ask for a review.
- Keep regularly informed of your child's progress and whether that progress is enough for the child to achieve the goals by the end of the year.
- Establish ongoing communication with the school personnel.
- Parents can request an evaluation if they feel that the services are not being implemented properly.



The information in this handout is adapted from materials written by Sandra Rief. Developed for the Learning, Education, and Attention in Pediatrics (LEAP) Clinic by the Center for Children with Special Needs (CCSN) and the Center on Child and Family Outcomes (CCSF) at Tufts-New England Medical Center. © 2007.

