

Planning Your Child's Individualized Education Program (IEP): Some Suggestions to Consider

Before the IEP team meeting:

- Think about your vision for your child's future as well as for the next school year.
- Write down your child's strengths, needs, and interests. List your major concerns for their education.
- Consider how your child's disability affects education.
- Think about your child's educational progress. What has worked? What has not?
- Obtain a copy of your child's evaluation results before the IEP meeting. Or, meet with school staff before the IEP meeting takes place to talk about the evaluation. This gives you an opportunity to understand your child's needs before the IEP team meeting.
- Consider the evaluation results. Do they fit with what you know about your child? Is the evaluation complete? Is it accurate? If you disagree with the evaluation, you may ask for an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at no cost to you. This evaluation is done by someone who does not work for the district. The school must pay for the evaluation or show at a due process hearing that its evaluation is appropriate. The results of an IEE must be considered by the IEP team in planning your child's IEP.
- Help your child to learn self-advocacy skills through the IEP process. Start at an early age if possible and involve the child as appropriate. Consider different ways to involve your child in developing his or her IEP. Self-advocacy skills are important!
- Bring someone with you to the IEP meeting who knows about your child. This might be a spouse, relative, or friend. It might also be a related service provider, advocate, or representative from a disability organization.

At the IEP team meeting:

The IEP meeting is very important. Team members will review and talk about the evaluation and other information about your child. The purpose is to help everyone understand your child's strengths and needs so that you can develop an IEP. The IEP meeting provides an opportunity to ask questions and share information about your child. Remember, you know your child better than anyone else does. School staff need to know what your child is like at home and in the community. They need to understand your child's interests and activities.

- Be sure that others at the IEP meeting never forget that the meeting is about your child's needs.
- Share your vision for your child, both short-term and long-term.
- Talk about your child's strengths and needs. Explain any concerns you have for their education.
- Remember that diagnostic tests and assessments do not present a total picture.
- When the teacher and school personnel are doing a good job, tell them so! Praise for a good job is a great thing.
- Be a good listener. Ask questions.
- Be sure that you understand the discussion. Ask to have it explained, if needed, so that you understand fully.
- What you know about your child will be used in making decisions.
- School data, progress reports, and other information will also guide planning for your child.

After the IEP team meeting:

- Take the IEP home to read before agreeing to it, if you are not absolutely sure about it. It is often less stressful to review an IEP at home. If you disagree with any part of what is proposed, tell the school as soon as possible, and work to resolve any disagreement.



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- The IEP must be reviewed at least once a year to determine whether the annual goals have been achieved and to revise it if necessary.
 - The IEP must let you know how often and when periodic reports on progress will be issued. These reports show how your child is progressing toward achieving annual goals. This may be through periodic reports that are issued at the same time as report cards. If your child is not making adequate progress, you may wish to have an IEP meeting to review the IEP and make needed changes. Or, you may call your child's special education teacher to talk about needed changes.
 - You may request an IEP meeting at any time during the year if you believe a meeting is needed. Sometimes a meeting will be held to discuss possible changes in your child's IEP. Or, you may talk about proposed changes by telephone with the special education teacher, and ask that the changes be added to the IEP.
 - If you decide to modify your child's IEP by telephone, be sure to ask for a copy of the amended IEP.