

Getting Ready for Your Child's IEP Meeting

Every child with a disability who is eligible for exceptional student education (ESE) will have an individual educational plan (IEP). An IEP is a written plan for the special education of a child with a disability.

The IEP is like a road map.

It describes what the child can already do and what the child needs to learn in order to reach his or her goals. The IEP also identifies the kinds of help the child will be provided. Your child's IEP will be written by a team of people at an IEP meeting.

The IEP team will decide which special services and supports your child needs in order to make progress.

You are an important member of the IEP team.

- This guide will help you know what to expect during the IEP meeting so that you will feel more comfortable and be able to participate effectively in the process.

Keep in Mind—

- The IEP is written for your child only.
- There is only one IEP at a time for your child.
- The IEP is a plan for up to 12 months of your child's education.

Who Can Be on the IEP Team?

The following people can be at an IEP meeting:

- You (both parents, if possible)
- Your child (if appropriate)
- At least one exceptional student education (ESE) teacher who provides, or may provide, services to your child
- Your child's general education teacher
- Someone who understands the evaluations that have been done for your child and can explain them (This may be one of the people already on the attendee list.)
- Someone from the school district who knows about special education and the school district's resources (This may be your child's ESE teacher.)
- Other people invited by you or the school

You may, in writing, excuse a team member from the IEP meeting if that member's area is not being discussed or if that member provided input for the development of the IEP before the IEP meeting.

How Can I Get Ready for the IEP Meeting?

Think about the goals you have for your child's future. Make a list of what your child can do, likes to do, and needs to learn. Make a list of types of help your child needs, including what has worked or not worked before.

Talk with your child about the IEP process and what he or she wants from it.

Let the school know in advance if you will need a translator or if you need to change the meeting time or place. Ask to look over your child's school records and evaluations. Read them carefully.

If you would like to, ask a friend, another parent, or an advocate to attend the meeting with you. Let the school know if you have invited someone, and ask who the school is sending to the meeting.

How Can I Participate in the Meeting?

Bring paper, a pen, and any records or evaluations of your child. At the meeting, the IEP team is counting on you to:

- Share your vision for your child for this school year and for the years to come
- Talk about what your child can do and what help your child needs
- Talk about any services your child has received in the past
- Listen and ask questions to make sure you understand
- Have a positive attitude—even when you disagree

At the end of the meeting, review the proposed IEP. If you would like to, you may tell the team you want to take the IEP home to think about it before signing. If you think the IEP is not finished, ask for another meeting. Once the IEP is complete, the school will give you a free copy.

Keep it in your records.

Make Sure the IEP Includes—

- What your child knows and can do now
- What your child needs help with
- How your child's disability affects his or her success in school
- What your child should learn by the end of the school year
- What special education services, supports, accommodations or modifications, and assistive technology your child will receive during the year
- An explanation of any time that will be spent receiving instruction outside the regular class
- How your child's progress will be measured n If your child is age 14 or in the eighth grade, what type of diploma your child is working toward
- If your child is age 16 or older, your child's goals for life after high school

What happens after the IEP meeting?

After the first IEP has been written, you will be asked to give written consent for your child to receive ESE services. If you give your consent, the school will begin implementing the IEP by providing the specially designed instruction and services in the IEP. Check that all the plans are being carried out and that your child is making progress.

Continue to look over your child's school work, keep in touch with your child's teachers, and visit your child's class. (Call the school first.)

The IEP must be updated at least once every 12 months. However, you may ask for an IEP meeting at any time if you believe it is important to consider changes in your child's IEP.

If you disagree with the IEP, there is a process for resolving differences:

You may schedule another IEP team meeting. You may seek mediation, file a state complaint with the Florida Department of Education, or ask for a due process hearing. For more information, talk to the ESE administrator in your local school district office.

This booklet was produced in collaboration with the Florida PTA by the Florida Department of Education, Dr. Eric J. Smith, Commissioner.

You will find more information of value to parents at the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services website at <http://www.fldoe.org/Schools/k12links.asp#ese>

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