



The ABCs of the IEP Meeting: What a Parent Should Know

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The IEP meeting is the first step to building a positive relationship with your child's teachers. As a parent, it is your opportunity to meet with the school staff and discuss your child's past and future performance in school.

What is an IEP?

IEP stands for *Individualized Education Program*. Students that have an IEP are or will be receiving special education services. The IEP is a written document that gives information about how the student is currently doing in school, what the school will do to help the student, and what services the school will provide for the student. Every child receiving special education services **MUST** have an IEP (it's the Law).

What is an IEP meeting?

The IEP meeting helps the special education teacher, regular education teacher, parent, and school representative agree on ways to help your child achieve success. You will be part of a team that will help to decide where and how your child will receive the help that he/she needs to be successful at school. The team will also decide on services for your child (for example, speech therapy, occupational therapy).

Is it important that I attend the meetings?

Yes! Parental involvement is the key to your child's success at school. The information that you can provide at these meetings is very important to achieving your child's educational goals in school and at home.

What will be discussed in the meeting?

If this is your first IEP meeting, expect to hear the results of tests, classroom performance, and behavior. Be prepared to hear about your child's strengths and his/her weaknesses. The school staff will have recommendations for how they can help your child in his/her areas of weakness as well as how the team can best promote your child's strengths.

What should I do before the meeting?

- If you cannot attend the meeting, call the school and ask to reschedule.
- Write down questions that you have for the IEP team, as well as goals that you have for your child. This way you will not forget anything when you get to the meeting.
- You are entitled to receive a copy of the proposed IEP documents prior to the meeting. Contact your child's special education teacher if you would like to obtain a copy.
- Talk with your child about school and his/her desires for the future.

What should I do during the meeting?

- Be an active team member provide any information that you believe would help your child at school and home.
- Ask Questions! Something you don't understand, ask to have it explained.
- Take notes. If both parents can attend or you can bring a friend or relative, have them take notes while you participate in the meeting. Remember, you will receive a lot of information at this meeting and it can be a little overwhelming. It will help if you have notes that you can review when you get home.
- Remember, if you do not agree with the program, speak up and voice your concerns.
- At the end of the meeting, you should receive a copy of your child's IEP.

What should I do after the IEP meeting?

- File the Individualized Education Program (IEP) papers in one place.
- Review the IEP throughout the year; make sure that the program is continuing to meet the needs of your child.
- Continue the program at home. For example, if your child is learning to say the "r" sound in speech therapy, it is important that you continue practicing at home.
- Help your child focus on abilities and progress, not grades.
- Find activities that showcase your child's strengths to help develop confidence.

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