

Preparing for the IEP Helpful Hints for a Successful Meeting

Before the IEP Meeting

1. Review your child's current IEP.

- What goals did your child reach? Which ones haven't been met? Are new goals needed?
- Ask to review all of your child's school records.

2. Talk to your child about school.

- What subjects and activities do they like or not like?
- Pay attention to what seems to motivate and interest your child.

3. Visit your child's classroom(s) and other possible program options.

4. Make a list of your child's strengths and needs.

- Consider academic, social, behavioral, and self-help skills for the next year and upcoming transitions.

5. Make a list of goals you would like your child to achieve.

- What concerns and hopes do you have for your child now and in the future?
- Share your expectations and dreams for your child.

6. Make a list of questions you have for the team.

- Review samples of your child's work and progress reports to see if appropriate progress has been made.
- Call your child's private therapist or doctor if you have any concerns. Take recent reports from them to the meeting.

7. Know what rights and responsibilities you and your child have for special education services.

- Ask for information about IEP procedures.
- Attend parent trainings, or contact a parent group for more information.

8. Be prepared to advocate for your child.

- Know who will be attending the meeting.
- Have someone with you for support.
- Organize your thoughts and materials.
- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Assume that each team member has your child's best interest in mind and that everyone wants to work together.

During the Meeting

1. Get answers to your questions.

- Get answers to your question(s) or ask that someone get back to you later.
- Ask staff to clarify terms or programs which are unfamiliar to you.

2. Steps to take if there are disagreements.

- Work as a team to explore options.
- Respect each other's opinions.
- Repeat your requests and concerns, stating your reason(s), to make sure the team understands your position.
- Sign the IEP to show your attendance, but do not give your approval for the IEP contents if you disagree.
- Ask to hold another meeting at a later date if the team can't reach consensus.
- Gather more information if needed.
- Avoid emotional confrontations.
- Ask for and review procedural safeguards. The school will give you the name of a parent advocacy group to help address your concerns.

3. School records are important.

- Request a copy of the IEP document.

After the IEP Meeting

1. The IEP meeting is over, but your involvement continues.

- Keep a copy of the current IEP on hand to review periodically and monitor progress.
- Ask for an IEP review meeting if issues and concerns develop and cannot be easily resolved.

2. Continue to learn more about special education procedures and self-advocacy.

- Contact parent groups for resources and training.
- Call the Parent Information Network for additional information at 1-800-352-4558 or 602-542-3852.

This article was developed in January 1998 by Becky Raabe, Parent Information Network Specialist, Contract # A0-0012-003, with funding from the Arizona Department of Education under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Inclusion in this article does not constitute endorsement by either department. This article is in the public domain and may be freely reproduced and disseminated, provided credit is given to the Parent Information Network, Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services.