

## Transcript of Virtual FIEP (April 2020)

(Slides 1-33)

### Slide 1-Opening Slide

Welcome to the Arizona Department of Education training on Virtual IEPs. Dispute Resolution presents how to leverage the facilitated IEP process in the online platform.

### Slide 2 FIEP Vision

The FIEP vision at the Arizona Department of Education is to help build capacity among educators and families this helps us ensure that collaborative, student focused IEP teams are able to make sound decisions when they are developing of the IEP. This follows along with the IDEA in providing a free and appropriate public education for children with disabilities.

### Slide 3 – Online IEP Meeting Tips

The 3 core components necessary for a successful FIEP meeting, are really all about “U” (you). It’s about understanding the IEP process under the IDEA. It’s about you utilizing those standard meeting procedures and using the meeting management skills to aid in minimizing conflict and maximizing the collaboration.

### Slide 4 – Virtual FIEP meeting

As we venture into the world of virtual FIEP meetings, remember that the process doesn’t change, the location does. You will still continue on with your meeting preparation and communication, this will be key to hosting and running a successful FIEP. You will continue with your prep and communication of all IEP team members as you’re drafting your IEP. And you will also continue to follow the standard IEP rules and regulations that apply. The thing that does change is the location.

### Slide 5 – The IEP team

When we talk about the IEP team the regulatory required members does not change whether you’re in person or virtual. The IEP team must include: The child’s parent (or the adult student if legal rights have transferred); Not less than one of the child’s regular education teachers; Not less than one of the child’s special education teachers; Individual to explain evaluation results; and A representative of the public school, whether this is your LEA or PEA representative.

### Slide 6 -IDEA regulation – Alternative Means of Meeting Participation

As we venture into the world of virtual FIEPs, the IDEA has already had in place the alternative means of participation. This allows us as the local education agency and the parents of a child with a disability to agree to use alternative means of meeting participation. Such as video conferences and conference calls. The FIEP process recommends using video conferences as this will allow you to read body language, facial expressions and to set the tone with your professionalism through the video as you would at an in-person meeting.’

## Slide 7 – Pre-meeting communication- the virtual meeting

Pre-meeting communication for the virtual IEP is just as important as the in-person IEPs. The preparation, communication and drafting and sharing of the agenda will help to minimize conflict and maximize collaboration and communication.

## Slide 8 -Preparation

When we talk about preparation...what is your districts policy? Do you already have in place a policy for at the beginning of the year where you calendar out your IEPs and due dates? Is it already set up 30-days out to schedule your meetings? Or do you do 60 days? Many districts already have this outlined within their IEP programs that they use, or it is within their district policy guidelines. Remember to send the meeting notice out early enough to ensure that the parent will have the opportunity to attend. This IDEA regulation does not change as we move from in-person to virtual IEPs.

## Slide 9 – Communication

Communication is key. The “what” does not change, the “how” might change. As we move from an in-person IEP to a virtual IEP things will start to look a little different in “how” you do them. Remember we are still in the pre-communication stage. This is all occurring prior to the IEP meeting. You will continue to have discussions with your IEP team members, but it may look a little different. You may need to utilize email or virtual meetings with the team members whether teleconference or video in order to draft and build the student’s IEP.

You will continue to schedule the parent phone call. This is a recommendation in our FIEP process as a pre-communication strategy to review any parental concerns for the upcoming meeting. We do like to suggest that you limit the time, and you start the phone call off with that time limit. Maybe you have a 5-minute time window to host this meeting with the parent to talk about concerns. This will be concerns about the upcoming IEP and it may also be concerns about the virtual IEP. This could be software, strategy and how it may work. Remember we are moving forward into a technological age and we are doing something very different and it was kind of thrown onto us. So, we are all in a learning process, so remember in your pre-communication to continue to have patience with your team, with the parent, as well as with yourself as we are learning the virtual IEP.

You want to be sure you confirm the software that is being used and that it is downloaded ahead of time in advance of the meeting. Sending out a communication email, to all those attending, with the software link or how to use them will be of great benefit.

You will continue to arrange an interpreter if needed and review any concerns with your team. Setting the tone in your Facilitated IEP is the same in-person and virtual. The “what” is still to set a professional tone, the “how” will look a little bit different. With a virtual IEP you can continue to wear your pajama pants but, on the video, your button-down shirt will give you the virtual presence of a professional setting. (said with slight laughter)

So, remember to set the tone. Your presence on camera sets the tone, as well as your voice, and your facial expressions. The pre-communication continues to set the tone. Being professional, dressing as you would for an in-person meeting and being on-time are key.

Make sure the devices needed are charged and/or plugged in. This is good for your pre-communication email to all team members when you send out your software link, to just send as a reminder. You also want to check that where you're located for your meeting, whether it be at home or in an office, that there is a strong WiFi or internet access signal for your hosting of the IEP.

#### Slide 10 – Draft and Share Agenda

Part of the pre-communication is to draft and share the agenda. This allows all team members to know is coming next in the discussions as well as what to expect, overall, from the FIEP meeting. This is just an example of one, here on this slide. Remember that local control in Arizona, you create and build your forms, this is just a state example, it is not necessary to use this agenda.

As we look at the agenda there are different points that we will review as we move forward in our training. The thing you don't see on this, if you are hosting a high school, remember to put in a transition plan. The other thing with this slide, is it is squashed. The meeting agenda that you will send out to parents or team members, you want to have enough space in between each bullet point for notetaking. This allows us to note take, prior to the IEP, for any concerns they have in those areas. As well as, if they have an idea for services / support and you are still in review of the PLAAFP, they can add those into that section and then when you get there, their notes are prepped and ready.

#### Slide 11- Preparation & Communication Key takeaways

The more you prepare, the more you practice, the more comfortable you will be with the virtual FIEP meeting.

#### Slide 12 – How to lead by design

How do you lead by design? Part of setting the tone is leading by design. As we move forward into the FIEP you will continue to lead by design by designing your virtual environment. Also, by leading by conduct and leading with the agenda. Let's talk about these a little more in-depth.

#### Slide 13-Leading by design: prior to the meeting

Leading by design is actually the setting up of the room. This is the "what" that doesn't change, the "how" will change for your virtual meeting. When we give this training, for in-person FIEP, you do set the tone and design of the room. When we are designing a virtual IEP you want to make sure that your platform being used has a welcome page ready at the start for team members as they arrive. This allows them to know they are in the correct virtual meeting and have not opened up a virtual meeting that is not the IEP for their student.

Remember to allow time for those tech needs and trouble shooting. It is ideal that the lead is early to troubleshoot. Remember you can access through chats in many of these virtual IEPs as you are there early to support the team members attending. Also, the technical devices and are they in place. All of this is how you will create prior to the meeting and lead by design.

Imagine if we showed up for a virtual IEP team meeting and we designed it 5-minutes before the start. The parent would feel overwhelmed, your team members would feel overwhelmed, and so would you. The preparation is key.

## Slide 14 – Ground Rules

When you post your ground rules in person, many of the schools and districts have a room or a conference room they utilize for hosting IEP meetings. This allows them to have a printed version of the ground rules in a visible spot. Following the ground rules are an important component of the facilitated IEP process. This is one of the ideas for the facilitator to review at the beginning of the meeting. They can also review it in some of their pre-communication materials that are sent out to the team and the parents.

These are just some ideas of ground rules, remember that districts and schools can create the ground rules that work for them and for their facilitated IEP process.

Ground rules given on the slide: Communicate clearly and listen carefully. (allow ample time for tech delay in responses); Respect the views of others; Share your views willingly; Ask and welcome questions, please use the digital hand raising tool. (If using a program with hand raising option); Be open to ideas and views presented; Honor time limits and stay on task. )

When you are opening your FIEP, whether it is virtual or in person, the facilitator opens the meeting, and after the welcoming and the introductions (you will have seen on the agenda) you also utilize the ground rules. This is a review of the ground rules and has every team member agree. The way this may look different in a virtual setting is you may need to post your ground rules in a visible spot. (either a chat box or as an introduction slide) You can also have team member agreement to this in a virtual IEP, depending on the platform used, by using a check mark or raising of the hand to say that yes, you agree.

## Slide 15- Leading by Design – room set up- virtual office

For your leading by design room set up, the virtual office still sets a tone. As you show your visual professionalism, you will dress the part, as well as check your background. You want to be sure to practice this through your camera to make sure that what they are seeing behind you is not something you would be embarrassed about later and that continues to hold a professional theme. You also will continue this by professional dress and body language, this is key. We don't want to run a meeting from our couch or slouched in a recliner, this does not give a professional image.

The participation. As we review and lead by design, we want to be sure that we spend a little bit of the time, at the beginning of the meeting, reviewing the tools for the virtual platform. This allows us to let everyone know they can mute their microphone, so that as each person is talking we are not hearing the background noise of children crying, or dogs barking, or cats meowing, or birds or dishwashers... that is one of the main things that is different about our virtual IEP, we cannot just close an office door to quiet the outside sounds.

Reviewing how participants can participate is key to setting and leading by design. You also to want to make sure, again, and review that devices are charged and that everyone is connected to a strong WiFi signal. There may be times in the meeting that someone's WiFi does go out and they just need to reconnect, or someone may click the wrong button and need to re-enter the meeting. Remember patience is key in virtual IEPs.

## Slide 16

The facilitator leads by conduct. They are the ones that open your meeting. This is a flowchart, remember a fluid flow chart, so if what works for your districts Facilitated IEP process is to change this around, please do so. Remember to build your FIEP process in a way that works for your district and your staff.

The facilitator will use an opening statement, we will review this in a minute. They will also email out the agenda, and pass-out (if you were in person), this is why it states to email out the agenda as we are doing it a second time right before or during the meeting. This could also be an agenda that is posted in the chat box. You want to be sure as the facilitator to do some introductions. This is the who, the what, and the why. This allows the parent to know, exactly, who is in the meeting and sometimes we may not have a visual until we meet them at the meeting. In the virtual meeting this is also why we recommend a video conference. Review the ground rules and where they are posted. This could be again in the chat box or an email that was pre-sent. You want to make sure you re-introduce the agenda so that everyone is aware of how to fill it out as the meeting moves forward. Remember to review / discuss your procedural safeguards and make sure that the parent has received them.

## Slide 17 Facilitator opening statement

As the facilitator of the FIEP, you may have been assigned by your district, you may be just a district facilitator, or you may be one attending this meeting and you are chosen to be the facilitator. In that case you would follow the open statement checklist.

Remember introductions really help a meeting flow. Don't forget to introduce yourself and remind them that you're the facilitator, so when you do bring up the time-checks or the different questions throughout and following the ground rules, that they know that you are the facilitator and that is why you are speaking up to make sure the meeting is running smoothly.

Ask each team member to introduce themselves, indicate how they would like to be addressed at the meeting and to explain their role in the meeting.

## Slide 18-Facilitator opening statement continued

When you describe the FIEP process you want to be sure that the IEP is developed in collaboration with each team member. And that they understand that they each share a responsibility for the meeting process and results. This allows everyone to have buy-in to the meeting, as well as to feel that ownership of their communication and that what they have to say is important for the student.

The agenda and ground rules are established prior to the meeting and the discussions for any conflicts that arise are managed throughout with the use of facilitation skills. We will talk about some of these skills as we move forward.

## Slide 19- Facilitator opening statement continued

As the facilitator you are there to keep the meeting on track and focused on the student. You are also there to help assist and resolve any conflicts that arise. As well as, help to pull from those attending the meeting some of the open communication.

Have you ever attending an IEP team meeting where you asked a question of a teacher to explain, how student-A is doing in their class? And the teacher simply says, good. They are doing good. This doesn't give a lot for us to go from in the meeting. But because of the pre-communication you had and the in-depth conversations to pull information from teachers that occurred before this meeting, you are able to then help with open-ended questions.

To say, thank you teacher. I remember in our pre-communication you discussed that student-A was utilizing this accommodation or modification to help support them in their math class, can you tell us a little more about this and how it supported them?

The key to this is using open ended questions as well as reminder statements of what they discussed with you prior to the meeting. This allows us to elaborate and really talk about some of the skills and supports that a student may need. Opened ended questions allow them to utilize more in-depth information in their answers and not just a "yes" or "no".

Slide 20- Facilitator opening statement continued

I like to think of a facilitator as like a captain of the football team, or the quarter back. Before the Superbowl, when everyone huddles around, does the team get together, in a huddle and say, "okay team are you ready...lets go loose!" No, Never. The team is focused on winning and for the best outcome possible. That is why an IEP is called and IEP "team". We are focused on the decision making and reaching a consensus for the best interest of the student.

The facilitator may also need to monitor the chat boxes to make sure all questions get answered. As well as any clarifying of the time set aside for the meeting and making sure that all team members can attend.

When we come back to our ground rules, we want to review them in a way that reminds those team members that we have all agreed to follow these rules and helps get us back on track for the supports in the best interest of our student.

We also want to make sure that parents and team members understand the use of a parking lot. In-person this may be sticky-notes on the back of a board. In a virtual IEP there maybe a sticky-note tool, depending on what program you are using for your virtual setting, but it also may be items that get put into the chat box or into the question box to review at the end of the meeting.

Parking lot ideas are typically items that have not been reviewed or that do not relate necessarily to special education programing, but they still are concerns of the parent or the team that need reviewed.

We also want to make sure as the facilitator, that we are able to focus the team on their commitment to continue the meeting if it needs to run further.

Slide 21 Post communication

Your post communication would revolve around your parking lot ideas. So, when you are summing up your meeting and your parking lot sticky notes, any item that does not relate to special education would go on your action plan.

This is where you will find the person who can answer the question for the parent. An example of an action plan is to the left, where you will have the task idea and the person who will complete it. For

example, if there is a question about 'free and reduces lunch' that could be a task that gets put down on your action plan. Then you can contact the district to see "who" can answer and complete this task and that is who will follow back up with the parent.

The key to action plan items is these are typically not special education items. They are things that your case manager will just locate the person to provide the answer but will not provide the answer themselves. The special education answers and follow up for post-communication come through the prior written notice. The same requirements for Prior Written Notice apply, those do not change just because we are moving to virtual.

Slide 22- Running the meeting

We have reviewed the pre-communication strategies, the 3 main tools for helping to run your successful FIEP meeting, we have also set up the introductions and the openings of the facilitator, and now lets move into running the meeting

Slide 23 – meeting management skills

We have talked about different skills that will help you in utilizing the platform for a virtual IEP. From setting the tone to setting profession environments, to ground rules and communication.

Meeting management skills also will help in minimizing conflict and maximizing collaboration. A key to this is to remember where everyone comes from when they come to an IEP team meeting.

Slide 24-Teacher perspective – picture of a women wearing many hats

Remember that we all come from a place where we wear many hats. Think of a teacher or your case manager, or your facilitator. Those attending your meeting...how many hats do you wear as a teacher?

Are you a teacher and a mentor, and a coach, and a counselor, an entertainer, occasionally the cheerleader? Maybe you're also the negotiator or referee at times. (light laughter) This is a perspective of a teacher and the many hats we wear.

Now we will add to that a tech guru and online facilitator. As educators we are always continuing to add extra hats or combine hats as we learn the tools necessary for fluidity within our positions

Remember....

Slide 25 – parent's perspective – picture of a parent wearing many hats with multiple arms do multi things.

The parent's perspective wears many hats too. They are not attending an IEP meeting for this one student, for this one day, for this one hour. They are juggling multiple things at multiple times. The same way a teacher wears many hats, so does a parent.

They are parents of children with multiple disabilities, that may need to have DDD involved or other case managers involved. They are trying to schedule doctors' appointments, running the household, other children. Remembering that we all wear multiple hats will help the fluidity of the meeting as well as our patience with ourselves and others.

## Slide 26 – Picture of the potential of conflict

Well it's a 6, not it's a 9, could it be a lowercase 'g'. We all look at things from a different perspective. Our lens on life changes depending on our history, our understanding, and the communication we receive prior to attending the meeting.

Remember that there is always potential for conflict. The key to lessening this potential is with that pre-communication and clear and open communication from the start.

## Slide 27 – It's not personal

I've talked about maintaining a professional environment, setting the tone with professionalism...but to say that nothing is personal and it's just business...

We're talking an IEP, and students and parents. IT is also personal. It's hard to maintain professionalism when dealing with a party who takes everything personal. The key to starting to understand how to deal with that, is by understanding that it is personal. It is their child and their life. It's very personal.

You're setting the tone for your professionalism by – leading by conduct but also by setting boundaries, and sometimes you are allowing that space for a parent just to be heard.

## Slide 28- additional strategies for breaking an impasse

If we get to an impasse in the meeting, this is where we will look a little bit different from an in-person FIEP to a virtual IEP.

You still can take the physical breaks that are recommended in our facilitated IEP team training. Take a break or recess or walk. Utilize these breaks in the digital space by setting a countdown timer for 5 minutes, ask attendees to close their cameras and silence their microphones as needed and to be back in a 5-minute countdown. Remember as the facilitator you are the timekeeper, so you want to make sure to and respect everyone's time and start back once that time clock ends.

Focusing on the process remains the same. Whether you are virtual or in-person. If you reach an impasse in the meeting, one of the key ways to provide support is to remind those of the earlier promise to participate in the good faith and give the process a chance.

Retrace the meeting progress. If your talking about goals or supports and the team has agreed on certain goals for the following year but is stuck on one, have a pause, and remind the team to go back to the ones that we have all agreed on and the strong points that the person (who is in disagreement now) made on those other areas. For example, you can reference back to the reading goals that the team thought would be in the best interest of the student and the reading strengths in the areas of support we're giving. You want to go ahead and point out and retrace those areas of strengths and then bring them back to say, what are some ideas like we had with the reading goals that we can implement here in the math, to support this student?

By pointing out prior agreements you are more likely to have consensus in agreeing in the new area. You also want to maintain flexibility and encourage this. Not only in the FIEP process itself but also due to the fact that we are in a virtual IEP and for many this may be the very first time they have ever even attended a virtual meeting.

We want to ask all parties involved for additional strategies if we reach an impasse for an accommodation that maybe doesn't work well in math but works great in English. What are some additional ideas or suggestions that we can come to that all can agree would be a good accommodation, or modification, or need, or support for this student.

Another way to help break an impasse is the role-reversal strategy. Have each party describe the other party's point. If a parent is really feeling unheard and can't get their point across, ask the school to describe what they feel they are hearing and what the parent is describing, or vice-versa. This helps – wear the other person's shoes. It also helps to bring clarity to the communication and the point of view.

Slide 29 – Conflict management-internal factors

Conflict can arise from external factors and as well, internal factors

Slide 30- responding with resilience

When we look at our internal factors of conflict, we want to be sure that we are responding with resilience instead of reacting. Responding with resilience would look like pausing, taking a moment to hear the thought or to absorb the aggression that is coming at you, pause, take a breath, reframe and focus on those impasse strategies that we talked about.

Another way to respond with resilience is always focusing on your breath. Taking notice of the actual breath going in through your nose and coming out through your mouth and how it fills your lungs. Focusing on this brings you back to that resilience instead of reactive response.

Another key strategy is avoiding the negative speech. How often have you sat in an IEP meeting and its been said, whether from a parent or district team member, well, student-A is just lazy, so he can't do his math.

That would be the focusing on the negative speech. Let's look at the reframe of that: We've tried multiple strategies for student-A, and accommodations and modifications to help him achieve in his math. We have yet to find the right strategy to support his needs, let's talk as a team to find solutions for supporting student-A in his math.

Do you hear the difference? One is a reactive response, and one is a more resilient response.

Slide 31-quote

“You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf” – John Kabat-Zinn

We can't stop that we are needing to move to a more virtual environment to continue to educate our students or to host our meetings. You can't stop the epidemic and health crisis that is currently going on. But you can learn to become a tech-guru and host amazing FIEP team meetings. And you can learn to still support your students through technology. And you can learn to become more resilient.

The strategies we talked about for resilience, we only hit on three in this shortened training. The idea behind this training, to help support you through the virtual IEP process and utilizing your FIEP is an abridged version of our full day training that runs between 6 and 8 hours.

We hope to see you in the following school year for a full-day of facilitated IEP team training where we will then discuss and do the activities of the 10 ideas of resilience instead of reactive.

Thank you for attending this training

Slide 32 –Links for further guidance

Remember our ADE supports and information to help with the guidance. Direct from the superintendent and on our ADE guidance to schools website on the right:

(<https://www.azed.gov/communications/2020/03/10/guidance-to-schools-on-covid-19/>)

As well as the COVID-19 special education resources and guidance from ESS. They update their information continuously as well as host meetings like the one you are attending today.

(<https://www.azed.gov/specialeducation/special-education-guidance-for-covid-19/>)

Slide 33 – End Slide

I hope you take away with you today new tools and strategies to help support you in your virtual IEPs by utilizing the facilitated IEP process. I hope your districts and schools are able to build a facilitated IEP process that works to support the students, teachers and parents within your schools.

Thank you for attending Dispute Resolutions Facilitated IEP, abridged version, to support virtual FIEP.  
Thank you.