

Attending Meetings to Plan Your Child's Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Before the IEP Planning Meeting:

- Consider the vision you have for your child for the future as well as for the present year.
- List your child's strengths, needs, and interests and your major concerns about his or her education.
- Consider how your child's disability affects his or her education.
- Think about your child's educational progress. What has been working and what has not?
- Request a written copy of your child's evaluation results or a meeting with school staff to discuss the evaluation before the IEP meeting. This gives you an opportunity to understand the evaluation before the IEP planning for your child.
- Consider the evaluation results. Do they fit with what you know about your child? Is the evaluation complete and accurate? If you disagree with the school's evaluation, you may request, in writing, an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at no cost to you. The school must provide the evaluation or show through a due process hearing that its evaluation is appropriate. The results of an IEE must be considered by the team in planning.
- Consider a variety of ways to involve your child in planning his or her IEP, starting at a young age. Self-advocacy skills are important to develop.
- If needed, plan to bring someone with you to the meeting, such as a spouse, relative, friend, or representative from a local disability organization.

At the IEP Planning Meeting:

This meeting is very important. You, the school staff, and any other parties attending the meeting will review and discuss information about your child to plan the IEP. It provides an excellent opportunity to ask questions and share important insights about your child, whom you know better than anyone else does. The school needs to know what your child is like at home and in the community, as well as what your child's interests and activities are.

- Make sure others at the meeting never forget that the meeting is about a real child.

- Share your visions for your child, both short-term and long-term.
- Discuss your child's strengths and needs and your concerns about your child's education.
- Remember that diagnostic tests and assessments do not present the total picture.
- When you believe that the teacher and school personnel are doing a good job, tell them so. Praise, when deserved, is a great thing.
- Be a good listener. Ask questions.
- Make sure you understand. If you don't understand something, ask to have it explained in a way that you can understand.
- Expect that what you know about your child will be used in making decisions.
- Use school data, your child's progress reports, and other information you know about your child to make decisions.
- Take the proposed IEP document home to review or ask that a copy be sent to you. You probably will not want to agree to a proposed IEP at the end of the meeting. You have 14 calendar days from the time you receive the written IEP to agree or disagree with the program in writing and return it to the school.

After the IEP Planning Meeting:

- Your child's IEP must be reviewed at least once a year to determine whether the annual goals have been achieved and to revise the IEP if necessary.
- You must be informed regularly about your child's progress, at least as often as parents who have children without disabilities are informed about the progress their children are making. You will be informed about whether your child is making progress toward meeting the IEP goals, and whether the progress is enough to reach the goals. If your child is not making adequate progress, an IEP meeting should be held to review the IEP and make needed changes.
- You may request an IEP meeting at any time.