

What does Self-Directed IEP mean?

Your child's (young adult's) Individualized Education Program (IEP) is like a roadmap for planning their life after high school. It shows where the student wants to be and how they are going to get there. The earlier students are involved in developing their IEP, the better. Participating in the IEP process helps develop self-advocacy skills. They also learn the importance of the IEP. Paying attention to what is in the IEP is part of how students make sure they learn skills in high school that they need to have the life they want after high school.

Having a self-directed IEP means the student takes a leadership role in the IEP meeting. Special education law in Virginia REQUIRES that the student be a participant in planning their IEP, as appropriate, starting at age 14.

Ways for students to be involved in the IEP meeting:

You can encourage your son or daughter to be involved and support them to:

- Help schedule the day/time of the meeting
- Invite people important to their life to the meeting
- Help decide the meeting agenda
- Plan what they will ask / tell the IEP team
- Share what are they good at and what they need help with
- Draft goals for themselves
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- Ask questions about things they don't not understand
- Respectfully advocate for things they need
- Respect and listen to input from other IEP team members
- Thank the IEP team members

Supports for Self-Directed IEPs

✓ PARENTS – At an early age, begin talking to your child about their interests, strengths, and supports they need. Be sure they are practicing and learning to effectively voice their opinion. Be prepared to allow your young adult to explore their own interests and preferences which may be different than yours.

✓ STUDENTS – Student input is invaluable. They should be encouraged to speak up, help make decisions, and take a role in planning their future. Students who practice these leadership skills in IEP meetings and other settings while in high school will be more successful in jobs, college, trade school, volunteering, etc.

✓ TEACHERS – Provide training to students on Self-Directed IEPs as part of the transition planning process. Include goals on self-determination and self-advocacy in the Transition IEP. Give students a lot of opportunities to practice “speaking up.”

The student should tell their IEP team:

- Their preferences
- Their vision for the future
- What they can do
- What they need help with
- What they have already achieved
- What they hope to achieve
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Remember, the IEP meeting is about THEM and THEIR LIFE!

The most important thing is for young adults to make sure others know what they want for their lives and what support they need to make their dreams come true!

Learning to speak up for yourself can be hard. The first step is for students to figure out what they are good at and what they need help with. The next step is to share that information with other people in some way.

Students can communicate:

- verbally
- in writing
- by video
- in pictures
- sign language
- using technology
- Braille
- letterboards