

Getting Ready for Your Student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting

Every student with a disability who is eligible for exceptional student education (ESE) services will have an IEP. An IEP is a written plan for the special education of a student with a disability.

The IEP is like a road map.

The IEP describes what your student can already do and what your student needs to learn in order to reach her goals. The IEP also identifies the kinds of help that will be provided to your student. Your student's IEP will be written by a team of people at an IEP meeting. The IEP team will decide which special services and supports your student needs in order to make progress.

You are an important member of the IEP team.

If you are representing a student with a disability, this guide will help you know what to expect during the IEP meeting so that you will feel more comfortable and be able to participate effectively in the process.

Keep in mind—

- The IEP is written for an individual student only.
- The IEP is a plan for up to 12 months of your student's education.

Who can be on the IEP team?

The following people can be at an IEP meeting:

- You (parents or legal guardian)
- Your student
- At least one ESE teacher who provides, or may provide, services to your student
- Your student's general education teacher
- Someone who understands the evaluations that have been done for your student and can explain them (this may be one of the school district staff already on the attendee list). If you have obtained any additional evaluations, provide them in advance of the meeting.
- Someone from the school district who knows about special education and the school district's resources (this may be your student's ESE teacher)
- Other people invited by you or the school

You may, in writing, excuse a team member from the IEP meeting if that member's area is not being discussed or if that member provided input for the development of the IEP before the IEP meeting.

How can I get ready for the IEP meeting?

Think about the goals you have for your student's future. Make a list of what your student can do, likes to do, and needs to learn, and the types of help needed, including what has worked or not worked before. Talk with your student about the IEP process and what your student wants from it.

Let the school know in advance if you will need a translator or if you need to change the meeting time or place. Ask to look over your student's school records and evaluations. Read them carefully.

If you would like to, ask a friend, another parent, or an advocate to attend the meeting with you. Let the school know if you have invited someone.

How can I participate in the IEP meeting?

Bring paper, a pen and any records or evaluations of your student. At the meeting, the IEP team is counting on you to:

- Share your vision for your student for this school year and for the years to come
- Talk about what your student can do and the help your student needs
- Talk about any services your student has received in the past
- Listen and ask questions to make sure you understand
- Have a positive attitude—even when you disagree

At the end of the meeting, review the proposed IEP. If you think the IEP is not finished, ask for another meeting. Once the IEP is complete, the school will give you a copy at no charge. **Keep it in your records.**

Make Sure the IEP Includes—

- What your student knows and can do now
- What your student needs help with
- How your student's disability affects her success in school
- What your student should learn by the end of the school year
- The special education services, supports, accommodations or modifications, and assistive technology your student will receive during the year
- An explanation of any time that will be spent receiving instruction outside the regular class
- How your student's progress will be measured
- By age 14, identification of the need for transition services, including preparation for your student to graduate with a standard diploma
- If your student is age 16 or older, the student's goals for life after high school

What happens after the IEP meeting?

After the first IEP has been written, you will be asked to give written consent for your student to receive ESE services. If you give your consent, the school will begin implementing the IEP by providing the specially designed instruction and services in the IEP. Check that all the plans are being carried out and that your student is making progress.

Continue to look over your student's school work, keep in touch with your student's teachers, and visit your student's class (call the school first).

The IEP must be updated at least once every 12 months. However, you may ask for an IEP meeting at any time if you believe it is important to consider changes in your student's IEP.

If you disagree with the IEP, there is a process for resolving differences:

You may schedule another IEP team meeting. Your district may have someone who is trained to conduct a facilitated IEP meeting. You may seek mediation, file a state complaint with the Florida Department of Education, or ask for a due process hearing. For more information, contact the ESE administrator in your local school district office.

This booklet was produced in collaboration with the Florida PTA by the Florida Department of Education, Pam Stewart, Commissioner. You will find more valuable information at the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services website at: <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/k-12-public-schools/helpful-links.shtml#ese>

