

25 Tips for Effective IEP Meetings

Before the Meeting:

1. Collect and organize all relevant information and bring it with you, including work samples, a copy of last year's IEP, and anything else you think might be helpful.
2. Prioritize what you feel are the most important issues to address. Bring a list.
3. Get materials from school ahead of time, especially assessment reports.
4. Build a positive relationship with one or more people on the IEP team. This may help you feel more comfortable and help ensure your perspective will be heard.
5. Know the purpose and format of the meeting. Find out who will be there, what is on the agenda, and how much time has been allotted for the meeting.
6. Have someone you trust attend the meeting with you to offer moral support, take notes, and help you stay on track.

During the Meeting:

7. Share your thoughts, knowledge, insights, and concerns. Remember, you are a very important part of the team and your input is valuable.
8. Develop rapport, treat people with dignity, and keep communication respectful, safe, and open. Try to understand what people think and why.
9. Take time to thank team members who are helpful and supportive.
10. Make sure the note-taker is writing down key points that are discussed, and that notes are accurate.
11. Be sure current levels of performance are reviewed before writing any new goals.
12. Focus on what you want for your child (your interests), and not the specifics on how to get there (your position). The rest of the team may have some great ideas you haven't thought of.
13. Take a break during the meeting if you need to speak with your support person, gather your thoughts or calm down.
14. Do your part to keep the focus on your child's educational needs and how they can be met in the most appropriate and least restrictive environment.
15. Be sure your child's services and placement are based on identified needs and the goals that were written to meet those needs.
16. Be aware that although the school's input and direction may be different than yours, it may be equally valid. Try thinking outside the box when you disagree.
17. Sign wisely. You do not have to sign at the meeting. You can take everything home and consider it, or sign in agreement with only part of the IEP document.

After the Meeting:

18. Review the IEP papers at home. Seek help if you don't understand the documents.
19. For further reference and easy access, put your new IEP and related papers, including any personal notes, into your organized filing system.
20. If appropriate, follow up with a thank you to any individual on your team who you found to be particularly valuable. Acknowledging them builds rapport.

21. Talk with your child about the meeting in terms he or she will understand. Your child's understanding of her or his disability may help your child better accept IEP services, as well as lead to self-advocacy.
22. Track and monitor your child's progress. Keep in contact with the teacher(s).
23. Make sure the IEP is being implemented as written, including the frequency and duration of services.
24. If you are not satisfied with your child's progress, you may request a new IEP meeting at any time. Make your request in writing.
25. Always keep in mind that you and the educational team will be having an ongoing relationship. It will be beneficial for everyone to build and strengthen positive relationships.

From MATRIX Parent Network, CA PTI (www.matrixparents.org)



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