

Parents' Guide to Preparing for an IEP

Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meetings can be a stressful time for both parents and school personnel. Being prepared prior to a meeting and knowing what to expect can eliminate most of the anxiety. This document's intent is to help guide you in that preparation for the big day.

Three Months Prior to Meeting

- Review last year's IEP to determine if a new assessment is needed. Typically assessments are done triennially (every three years) or when change of eligibility is needed, or skill levels need updating.
- If needed make a request for an evaluation in letter format that is hand delivered to school personnel. Remember that all communication either written or verbal should be in a professional tone and never emotional or hostile.
- Go to <http://www.fldoe.org/BII/curriculum/SSS/> and familiarize yourself with the grade level standards your child will be expected to know in the current grade. Create a list of standards for each subject that your child needs help in.
- Review the School District's policies and procedures on Special Education. This can usually be found online or you can request a copy.
- Review the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 at <http://idea.ed.gov/> and also the Florida State Board of Education's special education rules at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/rules/rulehome.asp>.
- You may also request a copy of your child's educational records if you do not already have a copy.

Two Months Prior to Meeting

- If an assessment was requested make sure that you have signed and returned consent form. The school system should have 60 days to complete any requested assessments. You may also attach a letter requesting copies of completed assessments at least 4-5 days prior to meeting date.
- Organize a large three ring binder with all of your IEP's, assessments, report cards, State achievement tests, and communication. Take this binder with you to all meetings.
- Write down all of your parental concerns, ongoing needs of your child and whether you feel the current IEP goals have been meet. Or you may want to download and fill out our planning portfolio at http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu/docs/Positive_Plan_Download.pdf.
- Begin thinking about who you would like to attend the meeting with you. It may be your spouse, friend, or advocate. Give school system prior notice of who you will be bringing with you. Discuss the upcoming meeting and make sure they are available to attend.

One Month Prior to Meeting

- Request a pre-conference call or meeting with the case manager/special education teacher to discuss any concerns.
- Deliver any private assessment (speech, occupational, psychological, etc.) that you would like the school system to consider and remind them that you requested copies of their assessment prior to meeting if you have not received.
- Put together a list of requests for services, goals, needs, and placements you want to ask for at the meeting.

One Week Prior to Meeting

- If you have not received the districts assessment call and ask when you will receive them. If you have received them then begin to review them and finish your list of request.
- Send a letter to the School with the list of requests and ask for Prior Written Notice to be given on all requests they reject.
- If you are dissatisfied with the assessments be prepared to ask for an Independent Educational Evaluation at public expense.
- Some schools prepare a draft IEP in advance of the meeting. If the school does so, request a copy of the IEP in advance so that it can be reviewed beforehand.

The IEP Meeting

- Be on time and professional, advice person attending with you to keep you on point.
- Bring a copy of your formal requests and parental concerns and hand out at meeting.
- Remember this is a collaborative effort and listen to other team members and work together as such. Both sides can have a change of plans depending on team input.
- If you feel your child's needs, present level of performance, goals, services and placement have all been covered appropriately then sign it.
- If you do not feel comfortable signing the IEP then don't, request that you be given a copy to review at home then decide what is missing and create a follow up letter to attach to the IEP.

Conclusion

The IEP process is a lot of work for both school personnel and parents, but careful planning and collaboration can prove to have a successful outcome. If you should have further questions or need further assistance please feel free to contact us.

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