

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Facilitation

A Guide for Parents of Children & Youth
(Ages 3-21)

This publication is part of a series on
special education dispute resolution options.
Other parent guides in this series include:

IDEA Special Education Mediation
IDEA Special Education Written State Complaints
IDEA Special Education Due Process Complaints/
Hearing Requests
IDEA Special Education Resolution Meetings



Note: *IEP Facilitation is not available in all states and is not required under the IDEA. Additionally, this publication is not intended to interpret, modify, or replace any IDEA procedural safeguards or requirements of federal or state law.*

What Is IEP Facilitation?

IEP Facilitation is an optional process, not required by the IDEA, that state educational agencies (SEA) or school districts may provide to parents and schools. A facilitated IEP meeting is the same as any other IEP meeting, except that a facilitator joins the meeting.

The facilitator helps with communication among team members, and does not make decisions about the student's IEP. The goal of a facilitated IEP meeting is to develop an IEP that is supported by team members and benefits the student.

- Families and schools agree to have a facilitator join an IEP meeting.
- Facilitators maintain open communication and ensure that everyone at the IEP meeting can participate fully.
- If disagreements arise during the meeting, a facilitator can help the team clarify and resolve them.
- The facilitator typically does not address issues that are not related to the IEP.

Benefits Of IEP Facilitation

The facilitator models effective communication and listening, and works with the IEP team to identify points on which they agree and disagree. In addition, IEP facilitation can:

- *build and improve relationships* among IEP team members, especially when they are having difficulty working well together;
- encourage parents and professionals to *consider new options* to address unresolved problems;
- help *resolve disagreements* more quickly than with other dispute resolution options; and
- *maintain decision-making with team members* who know the student best.

The Facilitator...

- Usually works with the IEP team to create an agenda and ground rules for the meeting.
- Guides discussion by asking student-focused questions, such as:
 - ◆ How is the student doing?
 - ◆ What changes, if any, should be made to the student's goals?
 - ◆ In what ways can we help him or her to reach his/her goals and objectives?
- Keeps team members on task and the meeting within the scheduled time.
- Asks questions to clarify points of disagreement and help identify workable solutions.
- Helps ensure that the language in the IEP reflects decisions made during the meeting.
- Does not take sides, impose decisions on the team, place blame, or determine whether decisions are right or wrong.

Frequently Asked Questions About IEP Facilitation

Who can request IEP facilitation?

Parents or school district staff may request IEP facilitation.

When and how do I request IEP facilitation?

You can request a facilitated IEP meeting anytime. Contact your child's school to see whether IEP facilitation is available. You may also contact your SEA or parent center for information about the availability and use of IEP meeting facilitators in your area.

Who will choose the facilitator?

Sometimes facilitators are selected on a random, rotational, or other neutral basis. Other times, parents and schools choose a facilitator together.

Do I have the right to have a facilitator at an IEP meeting?

No. IEP facilitation is not required under the IDEA. Check with your school district or parent center to see what types of collaborative problem-solving options are available to you and the IEP team.

Is there any type of procedural notice that I will receive regarding a facilitated IEP meeting?

Yes, as with any IEP meeting, the notification procedures found in the IDEA apply. Districts must give parents proper notice including the place and time where the meeting will occur, potential attendees, and the purpose of the meeting.

Beginning when the student is age 16 (or earlier in some states), the notice should reflect that the meeting will include the development of postsecondary goals and transition services.

Does the facilitator make decisions?

No. Facilitators are trained in effective communication and ways to address and resolve conflicts. They help IEP teams work together to develop effective IEPs for students. Members of IEP teams are the decision-makers.

Who attends a facilitated IEP meeting?

Members of the IEP team attend, including the student's parents, regular and special education teachers, a school district representative, and someone who can explain how evaluation results may be reflected in the student's IEP.

The IDEA also provides that parents or the school district may bring other people who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student, such as an advocate.

May the student attend the facilitated IEP meeting?

A parent may choose to have the student attend the

facilitated IEP meeting, depending upon the child’s age and level of maturity. Participating in a facilitated IEP meeting may provide a positive opportunity for the student to learn about self-advocacy.

If the student is 14 or older, or if transition issues will be discussed, encouraging the student to be involved in the development of his or her IEP could lead to more successful outcomes. In some states, the parent’s decision-making authority regarding the IEP transfers to the student when he or she reaches the age of majority.

IEP Facilitation is not available in all states or school districts.

Parents and family members are encouraged to contact their SEA, school district, or a parent center for more information.

Where and when is a facilitated IEP meeting held?

The facilitated IEP meeting is usually scheduled by the school district, in cooperation with the parent, and held at a time and place that is mutually agreed upon.

Do I have to pay for the facilitated IEP meeting?

As with any IEP meeting, a facilitated IEP meeting is provided at no cost to parents.

What if the team is unable to agree on an IEP at the facilitated meeting?

If issues, disagreements, or problems are not resolved at the facilitated IEP meeting, you may want to consider mediation or another form of dispute resolution. Your participation in the facilitated IEP meeting does not affect your parental rights.

What if I need an interpreter?

It is important that you understand the IEP meeting process and are able to participate. Let the school district know in advance of the IEP meeting that you will need an interpreter, so they can arrange for one to assist you during the meeting. Contact your school district or SEA for more information.

Ways You Might Prepare For IEP Facilitation

- Prepare a written list of issues you want to discuss and questions you want to ask.
- Think about what is most important to you for your child's IEP and make a note of these items.
- Ask yourself three important questions:
 1. Where is my son or daughter now in his or her educational progress?
 2. Where do I want my son or daughter to be a year from now and how can those expectations be measured?
 3. In what ways can the IEP team help him or her to meet those expectations?
- Organize your documents. Record dates and notes on them. You may want to make copies of some of the information to share with the team.
- Be willing to listen and carefully consider ideas that others may suggest.
- Arrive a little before the IEP meeting, so you have time to get ready to participate.
- Call your parent training and information center or community parent resource center. A staff member can answer your questions and help you prepare for the meeting. In some cases, a parent center staff member may attend the IEP meeting with you.
- Attend a workshop or training conducted by a parent center to learn about your role and responsibilities as a member of the IEP team.

Sources Of Important Information

A current list of all parent centers in the nation is available through the Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR): parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center or call (973) 642-8100



The Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE) is the national technical assistance center on dispute resolution: directionservice.org/cadre or call (541) 686-5060



Information on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is available online: idea.ed.gov/



For more information on IEP facilitation, resolving special education disputes, and dispute resolution options available under the IDEA, visit the CADRE Website: directionservice.org/cadre

To Find A Parent Center In Your Area, Contact:

Region 1 Parent TA Center

NJ Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
35 Halsey St., 4th Floor
Newark, NJ 07102

Tel: (973) 642-8100 Fax: (973) 642-8080
Website: spanadvocacy.org

Region 3 Parent TA Center

Parent to Parent of Georgia
3070 Presidential Pkwy, Suite 130
Atlanta, GA 30340

Tel: (800) 229-2038 Fax: (770) 458-4091
Website: p2pga.org

Region 5 Parent TA Center

PEAK Parent Center
611 N. Weber, Suite 200
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Tel: (800) 284-0251 Fax: (719) 931-9452
Website: region5ptac.org

Region 2 Parent TA Center

Exceptional Children's Assistance Center
907 Barra Row, Suites 102/103
Davidson, NC 28036

Tel: (704) 892-1321 Fax: (704) 892-5028
Website: ecac-parentcenter.org

Region 4 Parent TA Center

WI FACETS
600 W. Virginia St., Ste. 501
Milwaukee, WI 53204

Tel: (877) 374-0511 Fax: (414) 374-4655
Website: wifacets.org

Region 6 Parent TA Center

Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center
94 Galli Drive, Suite C
Novato, CA 94949

Tel: (415) 884-3535 Fax: (415) 884-3555
Website: matrixparents.org

Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR)

35 Halsey St., 4th Floor
Newark, NJ 07102

Tel: (973) 642-8100 Fax: (973) 642-8080
Website: parentcenterhub.org

Your Local Parent Center:

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