



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

TIP SHEET:

Preparing for an IEP Meeting

A student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) is an important legal document that outlines the student's needs and the special education services that he or she is entitled to receive. An IEP team creates the IEP and updates it every year at an annual IEP meeting.

How should I prepare for an IEP meeting?

1. Read the student's evaluations.

Parents should review copies of the student's evaluations before the IEP meeting. Parents are entitled to a copy of any new evaluations five days in advance of the meeting. Things to note include:

- The nature of the student's disability and how it affects him or her in school.
- The student's specific performance levels (academic, social-emotional, physical, behavioral, etc.).
- The student's strengths and weaknesses.
- Any recommendations from the student's teachers, evaluators, or other service providers.
- Whether the evaluations accurately portray the child.

For students who already receive special education services, try to determine how much progress the student has made since the last IEP meeting or the last evaluation. Has he or she met the goals on the previous year's IEP? If not, the student may need a different setting or additional services.

2. Know the NYC Department of Education's (DOE's) continuum of special education services.

Special education services exist on a continuum from the least restrictive environment to the most restrictive environment. Possible recommendations in community school settings include general education with Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS, or resource room) or related services (such as speech or occupational therapy); inclusion classes (called Integrated Co-Teaching, or ICT classes); full- or part-time self-contained special education classes; or a combination of these. Students also may be placed in all-special education schools (called District 75 schools), non-public schools, home or hospital instruction, or residential placements.

3. Invite other relevant people to be part of the IEP team.

The student's parent may invite any service providers (such as tutors or therapists), caseworkers or anyone else with relevant information to participate in the meeting, either in person or by phone. The IEP team should talk about any evaluations, the student's progress and current functioning, goals for the coming year and any concerns that team members may have. If the student's program recommendation changes, the team must discuss possible placement options, and note any preferences the parent may have concerning school placements. For older students, the team also must discuss the student's diploma path

and transition plan for when the student leaves school, including services the school will provide to help the student meet his or her transition goals.

The following people make up the IEP team and must attend the meeting (the same person can act in more than one role):

- The student's parent;
- A special education teacher or provider;
- A general education teacher (if the student is or may be participating in general education classes);
- A District Representative who is familiar with the resources available in the district;
- Someone who can interpret the student's evaluations, if new ones are being considered;
- Depending on the type of review, additional members may be required to attend.

Schools may ask a parent for a waiver to hold an IEP meeting without one of the required members. Parents should only consent to a waiver after considering the situation carefully, especially if the team member has direct knowledge of their child. Parents have the right to request that the school reschedule for a time when everyone can attend.

4. Understand what is included on the IEP.

Federal, state and local laws mandate that the following are included on an IEP:

- The student's recommended special education program and related services. Programs should be in the least restrictive setting possible for the student to accomplish his or her goals and progress in the general curriculum.
- A description of the student's "present levels of educational performance," including reading and math levels.
- The student's classification. Some common classifications are Learning Disabled (LD), Speech or Language Impaired and Other Health Impaired (OHI).
- Measurable annual goals for the coming year.
- Testing accommodations, modifications and participation in state exams.

5. Be prepared to be an active member of the team.

Consider before the meeting what program, services and accommodations you believe to be in the student's best interest. You may also want to talk to the school. Parents, and anyone they invite to the meeting, should be equal participants with other team members. The parent should not be asked to attend only a portion of the meeting or to sign an already completed IEP. Make sure to take notes about who attended the meeting and what they said.

What happens if the parent disagrees with the outcome?

If the student's parent does not agree with the outcome of the IEP meeting – for example, the parent disagrees with the school's classification or program recommendation – the parent may:

- Ask for a new IEP meeting to discuss modifying the IEP;
- Request mediation to resolve the disagreement with the school; or
- File a request for an impartial due process hearing.

NOTE: Signing the attendance sheet does not mean that you agree with the IEP or with everything that was said during the meeting; it simply means that you were present at the meeting.