Facilitating IEP Meetings

Promoting collaborative Individualized Education Program meetings as a preventative measure

Role of the IEP Facilitator

The state-sponsored facilitator is a neutral third party trained in facilitation techniques but is not an employee of the school district, a member of the IEP team, or an advocate for any person on the team.

Main Goal

The facilitator will maintain the focus of the IEP meeting on what really matters — the student's individual needs — while:

- Proposing group norms to provide structure and focus for the meeting
- Promoting dialogue and encouraging whole team participation for decision making while not imposing a decision on the group
- Acknowledging and addressing differing opinions in a respectful and neutral manner

IEP Facilitation

State-sponsored facilitation is a voluntary process in which a third party (facilitator) guides the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting to help maintain open communication and keep the IEP team members focused on developing a mutually acceptable IEP. Facilitation is a free service.

Parents of children with known or suspected disabilities and/or school personnel have the right to request facilitation services from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

> "The facilitator developed a written agenda and group meeting norms for the IEP meeting. Being the visual person I am, referencing your charts as we moved through the discussion was extremely helpful to me."
>
> *- Parent*

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Benefits of a Facilitated IEP Meeting

- May build and improve relationships among IEP team members and between parents and schools
- Enhances effective communication and listening within the group
- Provides opportunities for team members to resolve conflicts, if they arise
- Clarifies points of agreement and disagreement
- Encourages all team members to share in the responsibility of developing the IEP
- Maintains focus on the needs of the child

Preparing for the Meeting

- Be prepared to talk with the facilitator prior to the IEP meeting.
- If requested, email the current IEP or draft, as well as any recent evaluation data to assist in discussion and planning.
- Prepare a list of issues to discuss and questions to ask, as needed.

District Responsibilities

The school district retains responsibility for following special education requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Illinois Administrative Code.

> "Having a facilitator guide a process where everyone is on the same page is invaluable. Using visual agendas, getting consensus along the way, and building relationships as a team was dynamic. We are all here for the same reason ... to support the student."
>
> *- School Staff Member*

Parent Rights

All parent rights, notifications, and procedural safeguards are still applicable — as with any other IEP meeting.

The IEP document is enforceable through the state complaint process or a due process hearing.

> "It was the most productive IEP meeting I have ever attended. Now I understand my role and the roles of each of the IEP team members."
>
> *- Parent*

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