

IDEA: Tips for Parents

Parents of children with special needs, an individualized education program (IEP) ensures students with disabilities receive the services needed. The plan is developed at an IEP team meeting with parents and school staff. Below are suggestions to help families throughout the process:

Before the IEP team meeting:

- Consider the vision you have for your child's future as well as for the next school year. Request a written copy of your child's evaluation results or a meeting with school staff to discuss the evaluation before the IEP meeting. Do these results fit with what you know about your child? Is the evaluation complete and accurate?
- Consider a variety of ways to involve your child in developing his or her IEP, starting at a young age if appropriate. Self-advocacy skills are important to develop.

At the meeting:

- Use school data, your child's progress reports, and other information you have about your child to make decisions.
- You may not want to agree to a proposed IEP at the end of the meeting. Review the proposed IEP document at home. If you disagree with what is being proposed, you must notify the school as soon as possible to resolve the disagreement.

After the meeting:

- Your child's school must inform you regularly about your child's progress. You will be informed about whether your child is making progress toward meeting the annual IEP goals and whether that progress is enough to reach the goals. If your child is not making sufficient progress, a meeting should be held to review the IEP and make needed changes.
- You may request an IEP meeting at any time during the year if you believe it is important to consider changes in your child's IEP.

Source: Adapted from "Planning Your Child's Individualized Education Program (IEP): Some Suggestions to Consider," PACER Center Inc., www.pacer.org, 1-888-248-0822. Used with permission.