

12 Tips for Parent Involvement in IEP Meetings

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1. Understand your child's disability
 - a. Read all child study team or independent evaluation reports prepared for the IEP meeting before the meeting. If possible, ask a child advocate or a professional working with your child to help you understand the reports. Mark anything you do not understand. At the IEP meeting, ask the child study team member who prepared the evaluation to explain what was written. If the school district does not provide you with the evaluations in time for you to review them you can ask for a postponement of the IEP meeting.
 - b. Get information regarding your child's disability from your child's physicians and/or therapists.
 - c. Contact organizations specializing in your child's disability to obtain information about how your child's disability affects learning in school (many have websites).
2. Understand your child's academic performance
 - a. Communicate regularly with your child's teachers and therapists about how your child is progressing and/or problems and/or ask that IEP state that the teacher and therapists use a communication notebook to inform you weekly about your child.
 - b. Review homework and tests.
 - c. Make written requests for child study team meetings to discuss serious concerns.
3. Understand your child's legal rights
 - a. Read ACNJ's Basic Guide to Special Education or similar guides.
 - b. Speak to a special education attorney at ACNJ or other advocacy organization regarding the law.
 - c. Attend a parent workshop explaining education rights.
4. Write to the case manager when you have a concern. If you believe a change in the IEP is required, make a written request for an IEP meeting.
5. Write to the case manager if you plan on bringing an advocate, attorney and/ or a specialist who will speak about your child at the IEP meeting.

Giving Every Child A Chance

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6. It's best to go to the IEP meeting with another adult who can either take notes or ask questions that you might not think of at the time.
7. Prepare written questions in advance as you may forget to ask them at the meeting.
8. Be prepared to take notes at the meeting or bring a tape recorder.
9. At any meeting where you will be presented with an IEP, remember that this is just a proposed IEP and you do not have to sign the IEP at the meeting.
10. As a member of the IEP team, you can make a written request to the child study team that the school district pay for additional evaluations that you believe are needed, or ask that the school district redo an evaluation if the parent does not believe the evaluation is accurate. You can also ask for the school district to pay for an evaluation conducted by someone who is not an employee when you disagree with the school district's evaluation (known as an independent evaluation).
11. The initial IEP is the only IEP that you have to sign in order for your child to get services. All other IEPs do not require a parent signature to be implemented and will be implemented unless the parent informs the case manager in writing that the proposed IEP is not acceptable.
12. You have 15 calendar days to review the IEP and in that time you can request that changes be made. If you and the school district cannot agree on what the IEP should include, you can object to the child study team's proposed IEP by appealing to an Administrative Law Judge through a procedure known as Due Process.

WHO IS A PARENT?

The natural or adoptive parent, the legal guardian, foster parent when willing to serve or a surrogate parent, a person acting in the place of a parent such as a grandparent or step parent with whom the student lives or a person legally responsible for the student's welfare. Unless a parent's rights have been terminated by a court order, a parent retains all rights. An adult student also falls within the definition of a parent. A government employee such as a caseworker from the Division of Child Protection and Permanency, formerly known as the Division of Youth and Family Services or DYFS cannot act in the role of the parent when making decisions regarding a child's education.