

Tips For Getting Quality Education Services

Before You Meet:

- ✓ Gather information from a variety of sources:
 - Talk to your child, teachers, and other professionals on the team.
 - Review your child's records, highlight important information, and request any assessments that may be needed.
 - Make sure you are not hearing anything for the first time at the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting — request evaluations and a draft IEP before the meeting.
 - Review your child's school work; observe your child at school or home.
 - Be familiar with the general education curriculum and expectations for typical peers.
 - Think about how your child's disability will impact his/her experience in the general education environment — curricular and extra-curricular activities.
 - Be clear about your vision for your child and prepare a statement to share with the team.
 - Develop an agenda of issues you feel need to be addressed.
 - Be clear about the agenda and what you would like to accomplish at the meeting; share your agenda with the school team before the meeting. It is a good idea to have copies for everyone or ask that it be copied and handed out to everyone participating in the meeting.
 - Let the school team know in advance if you are requesting something different and find out if they will accept or reject your request.
 - Find out who will be at the meeting, just because they are invited does not mean they will come.
 - Invite anyone you want to be present at the meeting, and let the team know so that a meeting notice can be sent.

- ✓ Get organized:
 - File all of your things in one place, bring your file.
 - Read your procedural safeguards manual before the meeting.

At the IEP Meeting:

- ✓ Always speak civilly to everyone and allow others to finish speaking before you respond.
- ✓ Use the buddy system and take someone you trust to be an objective set of eyes and ears.
- ✓ Make every effort to let the school know you will be bringing someone and give them their name.
- ✓ Consider having your child present for at least part of the meeting, as appropriate.
- ✓ Share your information (written statement) about your child's talents, interests, and needs.
- ✓ Be clear about your agenda.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to ask questions: who, what, when, where, and how?
- ✓ Remember: no jargon, it's the law.
- ✓ Remember the process: Evaluation and Assessment → Discussion of your child's current level of performance → Goals → Objectives → Placement (Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) first!) → Instruction → Identify supports and related services (contingency plan) → Monitor.
- ✓ Only accept goals and objectives that are measurable.
- ✓ Remember there is not a single correct answer to issues, be open minded and creative.
- ✓ You have the right to tape record the IEP meeting for your future reference and clarification, but you need to make participants aware you are doing so prior to the meeting.
- ✓ Take notes to be clear about what actions were discussed and accepted or refused by the team.
- ✓ Stay focused on your agenda and don't be rushed.
- ✓ At the conclusion on the meeting ask for a copy of the IEP to take with you; even if the IEP is not finalized or even entirely complete.

After You Meet:

- ✓ Once you have a finalized IEP, carefully read the IEP (and minute — if your district uses them) and make sure it reflects what was discussed at the meeting.
- ✓ Follow-up — in writing and in person.
- ✓ Follow through — remember this is where most things fall apart.
- ✓ Continue to be an active participant on the team — attend meetings and volunteer. Ongoing communications with all team members in critical for success.
- ✓ You should receive your copy of the finalized IEP within two weeks (10 business days).

Disability Rights IOWA

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