



Student's Guide to Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meetings

Parents, students, and school staff are involved in creating an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for students with special needs in accordance with *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. In Illinois, students typically begin to participate in the formal IEP process at fourteen years of age. To assist students with understanding the process of the IEP meeting and to encourage their active participation, they need to know what happens at IEP meetings and what information is documented.

IEP documents are educational plans agreed to by the IEP team. The IEP informs all teachers working with individual students what the student's special education eligibility is (according to state and federal guidelines), what skills the student currently demonstrates, what skills the student needs to learn, what special services the student will receive, and where in the school building the specialized instruction will take place. The IEP document reminds everyone what was agreed to at the IEP meeting, which is typically scheduled once a year and lasts from forty-five minutes to one hour.

Who is at the meeting?

Members of the IEP team include parents, the student, the special education teacher and/or related service providers (Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, School Psychologists), a grade-level general education teacher, an administrator or designee who can allocate school services and resources, and other people who may advocate for the family. Students are encouraged to participate in the meeting to help develop an effective educational plan to meet their own unique educational needs.

What is in an IEP document?

Each section of an IEP contains important information. As required by law, the IEP must contain specific information, as follows:

- The student's present levels of performance in reading, math, writing, speech and language skills, school behavior, and social skills with other students and adults.
- Specific goals and objectives for the student to achieve in one year. Performance targets are established so that progress can be measured and reported to parents on each report card.

- The specific location within the school building that the student will receive specialized instruction, such as in the general education or special education classroom.
- The length of time that the student will receive special education services.
- The modifications or accommodations in instruction, assignments, or in the learning environment that the student needs to be successful.
- The modifications necessary for the student to be successful when taking tests.
- Qualifications for special education services in summer school.

Preparing for the IEP meeting:

To prepare for an IEP meeting, students need to know how they are currently performing in school and where they should be performing as an independent and successful student. The following considerations are important:

What can the school staff do to help me?

- Do I need extra help in math, reading, or writing?
- What helps me learn in the classroom?
- What do I enjoy about school?
- What would help me be more independent in class?
- What is easy and hard for me at school?
- What do I want your teachers to know?

What can I do to help myself?

- Do I contribute in class?
- Do I complete assignments independently and on time?
- Do I check my work to make sure it includes what the teacher requires?
- Do I ask for the teacher's help only after I try to complete the work myself first?

Participating in the IEP meeting:

It is a good idea for students to think about what to say before the IEP meeting, and to write down important ideas to make it easier to remember and talk at the meeting. It is important that students listen carefully to what is said at the meeting. Students may need adults to repeat comments or explanations. The IEP meeting is designed to help students help themselves become more independent and successful.