



## 5 Things Parents Can Do to Prepare for an IEP Meeting

### Description

I often hear this phrase from parents with a slight dismay in their voice.

For many, an IEP is a battle of the wits between parents and districts on an uneven battlefield. The Districts develop the reports and track progress. They are the 'experts'. Who are parents to tell the 'experts' what their child needs? It's no wonder that parents become anxious.

I have found that advanced preparation empowers parents and alleviates the stress.

Here are a few things you can do to prepare an IEP meeting:

#### 1) **Know Your Rights.**

Parents have a right to be active participants in their child's IEP meeting. Decisions regarding the provision of a *free and appropriate public education* should be a team decision. Other rights include: a right to receive educational records, to obtain a copy of the IEP, to provide partial consent, etc.

A copy of Parents' rights are provided at the beginning of each meeting. District staff tend to minimize the importance of providing you with a copy of your rights, "I'm sure you have seen this many times..."

If you have a copy from a previous meeting, take a glance at the procedural safeguards available to parents.

Or ask the District administrator at the meeting to explain to you what your rights are.

Knowing your rights levels the playing field a little more in your favor.

#### 2) **Make a List of Questions or Concerns.**

Bring this list to the meeting, and read them off at the *beginning* of the meeting. As the District addresses your concerns, make note of how they are addressing the concern and check them off the list. This will help you keep track of the District's responses and will help you to see what the District is not addressing.

### 3) **Request Copies of Assessment and Progress Reports.**

Requesting the assessments and progress reports that will be discussed during the IEP meeting allows you to anticipate what will be discussed in the meeting. Also, ask for the draft goals.

Make the request in writing. The District is supposed to provide records within 5 days of your written request. Try to request the records at least 10 days in advance of the IEP meeting to ensure timely receipt and time for you to review the records.

### 4) **Review the District Provided Records.**

In reviewing the records, check for accuracy. Some reports provide progress and present levels of performance. If you have any disagreements, questions or concerns, note them and inquire about them during the meeting.

District reports can be technical and people who are not experts in that specific area often do not understand the entire report or the recommendations. Having a report in advance of the meeting will give you an opportunity to digest the report and you can make note of any questions you have. Having your questions handy will make the discussion of the report more efficient and it should lend to a better understanding.

District evaluations are routinely challenged. Do not assume that the "experts" have conducted the evaluations according to the law. The important question for a parent is, does it make sense based on what you know about your child?

### 5) **Send a Taping Notice to Record the Meeting.**

Do so in writing, at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. It is good practice to tape record meetings. Sometimes, team discussions occur faster than one can write or type. So if there is any confusion as to what the district recommended or offered, you can refer to the recording for clarification. This way, you can focus more on the discussion and less on note-taking.

*Being prepared is half the battle. The other half is for parents to be empowered to assert their right to be an equal member of the IEP team, and to voice their concerns and demanding that the District address the concern.*

#### **Category**

1. Blog
2. Children Services

#### **Date Created**

2014/04/23

#### **Author**

lawyer4children

---