Meeting of the Minds

Preparing for Successful IEP Meetings
WarmLine Family Resource Center

Parent Training & Information Center (PTI) providing peer support and information to families of children with disabilities 0-26 years old in 26 counties of Northern California
Parents are their child’s best and longest-lasting advocates.

Parents with good communication skills can be even more effective!

“Parents are the experts. (Professionals) have the expertise. Together we can make it happen.”
Unknown
How Did We Get Here? Assessments!

• Referral should be addressed to Director of Special Education (for initial) or Program Specialist (if child has IEP)

• Should always be in writing (Email is O.K., but make sure it was received and note date.)

• Keep a copy
Timelines for Assessments and IEP

REFERRAL
(Request for Assessment)

ASSESSMENT PLAN
15 days *

PARENTS REVIEW/APPROVE ASSESSMENT PLAN (15 days)

ASSESSMENT COMPLETED & IEP HELD (60 days **)

IEP IMPLEMENTATION
After being signed by the parents.
(You may take the IEP home to review it before signing it.)

ANNUAL IEP REVIEW (At least once per year)
Special Education eligibility reviewed every three years (triennial).
Assessments & Evaluations

1. Evaluations (assessments) help determine if a child is eligible for special education services and what services are needed.

2. No one assessment tool can be used to assess eligibility.

3. Child must be assessed in all areas of suspected disability.

4. The assessment plan tells what areas will be assessed and the title of the examiner, e.g. school psychologist.

5. If parents disagree with assessment results, they can request an Independent Education Evaluation (IEE) at public expense. (Only one IEE each time the school conducts an evaluation.)
IEP = Individual Education Program

What the heck does it all mean?
IEP

1. Legally binding document describing school district’s plan to provide educational & related services to eligible child with disability.

2. (FAPE = Free Appropriate Public Education.)

3. Can be amended without new meeting.

4. Parent can request IEP at any time in writing. District has 30 days to convene meeting.
Eligibility for Special Education Services

- Autism (AUT)
- Deaf-Blindness (DB)
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DEAF/HH)
- Emotional Disturbance (ED)
- Established Medical Disability (birth-5)
- Intellectual Disability (ID) (formerly “Mental Retardation”)
- Hearing Impairment (HI)
- Multiple Disabilities (MD)
- Orthopedic Impairment (OI)
- Other Health Impaired (OHI)
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Speech/Language Impairment (SLI)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Visual Impairment (VI)

Disability must also impair the student’s ability to access the curriculum.
Components of IEP

“Information / Eligibility”

Why the child is eligible for Special Education.

“Present Levels of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance:”

Student’s Strengths/Preferences/Interests:

Parent Concerns (Relevant to educational progress):

Present Levels of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance:

• Standardized Tests
• Pre-academic/Academic/Functional Skills
• Communication Development
• Gross/Fine Motor Development
• Social Emotional/Behavioral
• Vocational
• Adaptive/Daily Living Skills
• Health

“State-Wide Assessments”
**Components of IEP**

“Individual Transition Plan (ITP)”

**Transition**: Begins with IEP at 16 Years Old

**Diploma or Certificate**: Diploma ends Special Education services. Certificate of Completion provides Special Education until age 22.


CAHSEE has been suspended until 2018

**Student Participation**: The student was invited to the meeting

**Adulthood**: On or before 17th birthday, student has been advised of rights at age 18
Components of IEP
“Individual Transition Plan (ITP)”

Postsecondary goals must be: appropriate, measurable

Based on: Age-appropriate transition assessments

Assessments based on: Education, employment, independent living skills (where appropriate)

Transition services: Courses of study to assist student reaching postsecondary goals

Related services: To allow the student to access Special Education

Outside agencies: Providing postsecondary services ID’d and invited? (i.e., Regional Center, Dept. of Rehabilitation)
Components of IEP

“Annual Goals”

Baseline: Present Level of Performance
- Specific,
- Measurable,
- Attainable/Action Words,
- Relevant,
- Time-bound

Based on grade level standards

Goals are major milestones

Short-term objectives are measurable, intermediate steps that move the student toward achieving the (annual) goals

See next slide for example.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Need: Task Completion</th>
<th>Goal: By 3/2016, Carl will independently initiate and complete academic work 80% of the time as observed for 4/5 opportunities for two consecutive weeks.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline: Carl is completing his work without support 0% of the time.</td>
<td>By 5/2015, Carl will initiate and complete academic work 40% of the time as observed for 4/5 opportunities for two consecutive weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP Date: 3/20/15</td>
<td>By 9/2015, Carl will initiate and complete academic work 60% of the time as observed for 4/5 opportunities for two consecutive weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By 12/2015, Carl will initiate and complete academic work 80% of the time as observed for 4/5 opportunities for two consecutive weeks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Components of IEP

“Offer of FAPE”

(Free Appropriate Public Education)

Classroom placement in Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) – (See next slide.)

Related services: i.e., speech, OT, etc. needed to benefit from Special Education

• Who will provide? (i.e., District of Service)
• Where? (i.e., Separate Classroom)
• Individual or Group?
• How often? How long? (i.e., 30 min x 4 totaling 120 min/month)
• Beginning and end dates? (Typically date of IEP to following year)

Transportation: Yes/No

Extended School Year (“Summer School”): If child will have significant regression/recoupment period.
Thehigherthecategory
onthepyramid,themore
“restrictive”the
placement.

Thelawrequiresthatthestudentbeplacedinthe
“LeastRestrictive
Environment”(LRE).

The Continuum of Placement:

1. Instruction in Regular Classroom
2. Supplemental Support in General Education Class (More later…)
3. Resource Specialist Program (RSP)
4. Special Day Classes (SDC) Self-Contained Classrooms (SCC)
5. State Special Schools
6. Non-Public Schools
7. Instruction in Home/Hospitals
8. Residential Placement

The law requires that the student be placed in the “Least Restrictive Environment” (LRE).
Components of IEP

“Accommodations, Modification, Supplementary Aids/Services”

Aids, services, and other supports provided to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate...

- Supports to address environmental needs
- Levels of staff support needed
- Planning time for collaboration needed by staff
- Child’s specialized equipment needs
- Pacing of instruction needed
- Presentation of subject matter needed
- Materials needed
- Assignment modification needed
- Self-management and/or follow-through needed
- Testing adaptations needed
- Social interaction support needed
- Training needed for personnel
- And more...
Components of IEP

“Offer of FAPE - Educational Settings”

Percentage of the day will the child be outside/inside regular class, extracurricular & non-academic activities

How and when parent will be informed of student’s progress

Activities to support the child’s transitions (i.e., kindergarten, middle/high school, special education to general education, etc.)

Graduation Plan - projected date, graduate with Diploma or graduate with Certificate of Completion
Components of IEP
“Special Factors”

Does the student require assistive technology?

Does the student require low incidence equipment/services?

Considerations if student is blind/visually impaired or deaf/hard of hearing

If student is English Language Learner, how will services be delivered/measured?

Does student’s behavior impede learning of self or others?
   If yes, specify positive behavior interventions, strategies, supports.

Behavior Goal is part of IEP?

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) attached?
Components of IEP  
“Meeting Notes”

• Elaboration/explanation of what was discussed and decisions made
• Establish procedural compliance
• Show parent participation (requests, input, consent or disagreement)
• Document that several options were discussed and considered
• Ensure that a clear and appropriate offer of FAPE was made
• Clarification of items
Components of IEP
“Signature/Parent Consent”

Attendees sign and date

Parent can agree to all or parts of IEP.
If there is disagreement, include short explanation. For example – “I disagree with the recommendation to decrease speech therapy from 30 minutes/week to 30 minutes/year.”

You do not have to sign the consent immediately after the meeting. You may take the IEP home to review. Find out who you should contact (and how) if you have questions and who you should return it to.
Things to Double Check Before Signing…
Excerpted from Understood.org

• Is the statement of Present Levels of Performance based on information from you and your child’s teachers?

• Are the annual goals, supports and services clearly stated? Is enough detail given?

• Does the IEP state how and when the school will report your child’s progress toward goals?
Things to Double Check Before Signing…
Excerpted from Understood.org

• Does the IEP include everything you agreed to, including accommodations, services and goals?

• If you requested changes to the IEP, are they in the final document?

• Is there anything in the IEP that you did not discuss or agree to?
Preparing for the IEP Meeting

Yep. It may feel like this before the IEP meeting!
Think of the IEP Meeting as an Opportunity to:

- **MEET** the members of your child’s team
- Provide **INPUT** into the design of a program tailored to your child’s individual needs
- **SHARE** the special perceptions and knowledge you have about your child
- **Work CREATIVELY** with your child’s teachers and other providers to solve issues
Let’s Get Prepared – Records

- **Create a binder** that contains ALL of your child’s:
  - Communication Logs
  - Assessments
  - IEPs
  - Progress Reports/Report Cards
  - Educationally related medical information

(When seeing a new medical provider, ask to be sent a copy of the initial exam/assessment.)

**Update it Regularly!**
Let’s Get Prepared – Monitor & Review

**Review** your child’s current IEP:
- Why is your child eligible for special education?
- What services are currently being provided?
- What are the current goals?

**Monitor** your child’s current IEP. Know what he/she is working on and if progress is being made on goals.

Obtain copies of new assessments **prior** to the meeting. Read them and write down your questions/comments.
Let’s Get Prepared - Support

Don’t go to the meeting alone. Take someone to take notes for you, provide moral support and afterward discuss how the meeting went.

(If you’re taking more than one person, let the facilitator know, so there is enough seating.)
Let’s Get Prepared – Plan Solutions & Strategies

Is your child experiencing challenges at school? Get specific information from the teacher and go to the meeting with possible solutions.

Carl has a learning disability and struggles with (hand) writing his spelling words and vocabulary sentences.

Possible solutions to suggest:
• Keyboarding
• Dictating words
• “Low tech” adaptive technology such as pencil grips, slant board, etc.
# Let’s Get Prepared – Goal Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Need</th>
<th>PLOP (Pres. Levels of Performance)</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
<td>Assessed Present Levels of Performance</td>
<td>Progress toward grade level work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Arts</strong></td>
<td>Assessed Present Levels of Performance</td>
<td>Progress toward grade level work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Self-Help/Independent Living Skills** (i.e., dressing grooming, organizing personal belongings, money management, mobility in community.) | Can pull up pants  
Can identify coins  
Can take public transportation w/ help | Work on toilet training  
Learn monetary value of coins  
Take public transportation independently |
| **Communication Skills**                         | Non-verbal (after years of speech therapy)  
Age appropriate receptive language | Assess for and begin instruction for an augmentative communication device  
Work on expressive language skills |
| **Social/Behavioral Skills**                     | Friendly  
Anxious during lunch (cafeteria noise) | Work on maintaining personal space w/ peers  
Work with OT to decrease sensitivity to loud noise |
## Let’s Get Prepared – Goal Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Need</th>
<th>PLOT (Pres. Levels of Performance)</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-vocational/Vocational (Incl. following directions, task completion, organization of work.)</td>
<td>Interested in working in food service</td>
<td>Enroll in Workability program for food service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty completing class assignments</td>
<td>Create strategy to organize and reward completion of class assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Skills (Leisure time, games, sports)</td>
<td>Wants to socialize with peers, but does not understand games</td>
<td>Teach skills and rules of playground games. Provide peer to support during recess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Activity/Motor Skills</td>
<td>Can skip</td>
<td>Teach to run and dribble ball (see above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (Medication administration, equipment use, etc,)</td>
<td>Knows that he has diabetes</td>
<td>Support independent blood sugar testing per doctor’s schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Written on “Health” section of Present Levels of Performance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parent Report for: Carl Vespoli

Vision for Carl’s future: Carl will live away from home with support, have friends, a social life and paid employment in the food/hospitality industry.

Primary concerns:
• Completing tasks/following directions
• Social interactions with peers
• Behaviors associated with stress
• Lack of “soft” employment skills

Goals:
• Task completion/following directions
• Appropriate communication/social skills with female peers
• Identify stressful situation(s) at school and plan day to avoid them when possible
• Positive Behavior Support Plan to assist with coping strategies when stressors cannot be avoided
• Work on needed employment skills
At the Meeting
Who Should (Must*) Attend?

- **Parent** (Legally part of the team.)
- * At least one **General Education** teacher (if child receives general education services).
- * At least one **Special Education** teacher or Special Education provider
- * **School district representative** knowledgeable about General & Special Education curriculum & resources of the district
- * **Specialist(s)** who can interpret evaluations & instructional implications of them
- **Child** (must be invited at age 16 – earlier participation can help build self-advocacy skills.)
- **Anyone the parent would like to invite**
At the IEP Meeting

“The ability to ask the right question is the first step to finding the right answer.”

What service/intervention is recommended?

Why is it recommended?

What is the goal?

What will it look like?

Who will provide it?

When will it be provided?

Where/how will it be provided?

How will I know my child is making progress?
Say What ??

• For the sake of the child, parents and professionals must be able to communicate effectively.

• Effective communication takes practice and is a two-way street.
Partnership

When parents and professionals work together as partners, they:

• Agree that the parent is the constant in the child’s life and is the only person who will be at every IEP meeting,

• Can disagree without it affecting the partnership,

• Base discussions on facts and data,

• Use compromise or a trial period for new ideas; “Let’s try __________ until ______________. Then we’ll meet to discuss if it is effective and any needed changes.”

• Realize that no one has all the answers,
Before the Meeting

• Arrive early enough to sit where you feel the most comfortable and effective.

• If you do not bring your child to the meeting, bring a photograph of him/her to place on the table.

• Bring food to share. It lightens the mood and makes people feel valued.
At the Beginning of the Meeting

• Open the meeting on a positive note, such as thanking the members of the team for being there.

• Share a short, interesting story about your child.

• Share your goals and agenda. Make sure the meeting agenda includes your items.
At the Beginning of the Meeting

• Find out how much time is allotted for the meeting. Share with the group that if the IEP is not completed in the agreed time, you expect to schedule a follow-up before leaving.

• Agree to set aside 15-20 minutes before the end of the meeting to review the notes that were written and decisions that were made.
During the Meeting

• Use “I” statements.
  “I feel just as concerned as you are about those behaviors. Let’s work together to get the Functional Behavior Analysis expedited.”

• Share what works for you.
  “You said that Gwen is resistant to beginning her math assignment. Here’s what works for us at home…”

• Your child’s negative issues/behaviors may demonstrate a need for a service or intervention.

  Teacher: “Dave acts out in class daily.”
  Parent: “Let’s write a request for a Functional Behavior Analysis to pinpoint why the behaviors are occurring.”
  Teacher: “Mike is always losing his homework.”
  Parent: “It sounds as though he would benefit from having some goals around organizational skills.”
During the Meeting

• At the end of the meeting, summarize the outcomes, including **who** is going to do **what** by **when**. Ask that they be included in the IEP notes.

• End the meeting on a positive note whenever possible. Even if you disagree, you might be able to say, “I think we understand each other’s perspectives better now.”
10 Diffusing Phrases to Use at IEP Meetings
by Amada Morin from www.understood.org

Emotions can run high at IEP meetings. But it’s important to focus on the end goal: helping your child. Here are 10 phrases you can use to redirect conversation and defuse tense situations.

1. **I may be misunderstanding.** Can you show me a detailed interpretation of those test results?

2. **I can show you** where I’ve highlighted that information in the report and progress notes. Can we make each team member a copy?

3. **How can we work together to make this happen?** The law says services must meet my child’s unique needs, and this is the recommended service.
4. I understood you to say that this is how you do things. **May I see a copy of the written policy** that outlines this procedure?”

5. Is it Mr. Smith who has the authority to made decisions? **Let’s ask him to join us.**

6. **I understand** you only have 15 minutes left for this meeting. While we’re all here, why don’t we set up another time to continue this conversation?”

7. **I’ve noticed** that at the end of the day, Olivia isn’t able to focus on her homework without getting frustrated. I’d like to talk about how to make that easier for her.
8. I like the idea of checking in every 15 minutes to see if Olivia is on task. **How will that look in the classroom?**

9. “OK, you don’t think that will work for Olivia. **What alternatives do you suggest** to address that identified need?”

10. **Let’s talk about what’s working.** Maybe some of those strengths and strategies can help us find ways to address the trouble spots.”
Use the communication skills we talked about.

Don’t forget to take snacks!
“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

Helen Keller
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