

IEP Toolkit for Parents:

Ideas and Tips for a Successful and Productive IEP Meeting



**TRINITY COUNTY SELPA/TRINITY COUNTY OFFICE OF
EDUCATION**

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Idea: Communicate with Everyone!



Start by Talking to your Child...

- Check on current preferences, perceptions, needs, concerns, issues, desires.
- Discuss your child's participation (if appropriate) in the IEP meeting. If your child is able, having them explain what they see as challenging or successful is a great way to keep them involved in the process.
- Determine what, if anything, your child wants to share with the team, and how you can assist in that process. Having visual aides or alternative communication tools may be helpful.

Connect with the School Team...

- Establish current status of your child's performance/achievement - clarify with school staff any areas of success and/or concern.
- Schedule observations, if necessary.
- Communicate anything that needs clarification; misunderstandings unravel our relationships!
- Notify the case manager of any individuals, professional or not, you are planning to invite to the meeting.
 - Make sure to list all invited parties on the IEP Notice of Meeting so no one gets left out.
 - Identify any agenda items you want addressed prior to the meeting.



Idea: Collect your Information

Review and Organize your documents. Consider the following:

- Recent and all other relevant evaluations pertinent to the current school year.
- The current and other relevant IEPs, to evaluate the extent of progress toward identified goals and objectives.
- The most recent and other relevant report cards.
- A list of your concerns, issues, questions, ideas.
- Documentation to support your request for any new services. What do you see/what documents do you have to support the request? Having information to present helps the school in making that determination.
- All relevant correspondence and electronic and phone communication notes with school personnel and outside professionals.
 - If you have new information or new evaluations, the school can consider outside information in making any changes to the IEP.
- Statements from your child regarding his/her concerns, questions, issues, goals.
- Possible solutions to challenges you have identified. Its always good to present an answer rather than point out a problem!



Idea: Know your Role in the IEP as a Valuable Member!

Always Remember...

- Be introduced to everyone at the meeting. If a title is unclear or not made known to you, ask them what capacity they serve your child. Remember, as the parent, you serve as the most important member of the team and offer a valuable perspective!
- Actively listen; don't be afraid to participate in the conversation.
- Share your child's strengths, challenges, and the things that motivate them, both at home and in the classroom. The more strategies and input we have, the better.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions, especially if the topic is things you aren't familiar with or don't know. We are here to work as a team and everyone needs to be involved!
- IEP meetings can cover a lot of information – don't be afraid to jot down your own notes and ideas.
- Be an equal partner in the decision making process.



Idea: Be an Active Participant in the Process



Always Remember...

- You are an expert with invaluable knowledge about your child's abilities and needs!
- If needed, bring support to the IEP meeting. This can be family members or people you trust for moral support...it can also be an advocate.
 - Federal law allows you to invite anyone who has knowledge or expertise about your child.
- Ensure you notify the district, on the Notice of Meeting, if you plan on bringing anyone to the IEP.

Idea: Write it Down!

Always Remember...

- If at all possible, try to jot down specific ideas from the meeting.
- If you choose to audiotape the IEP, you must give the district 24 hours advanced notice. Be sure they receive the notice, do not assume an email or text was received by the staff member to allow for the 24 hours notice. If not received 24 hours in advance, the request could be denied.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand
 - A lot of information is shared during the meeting and asking to stop to re-explain or for members to slow down for understanding is a good thing to do; we want to make sure everyone is on the same page!

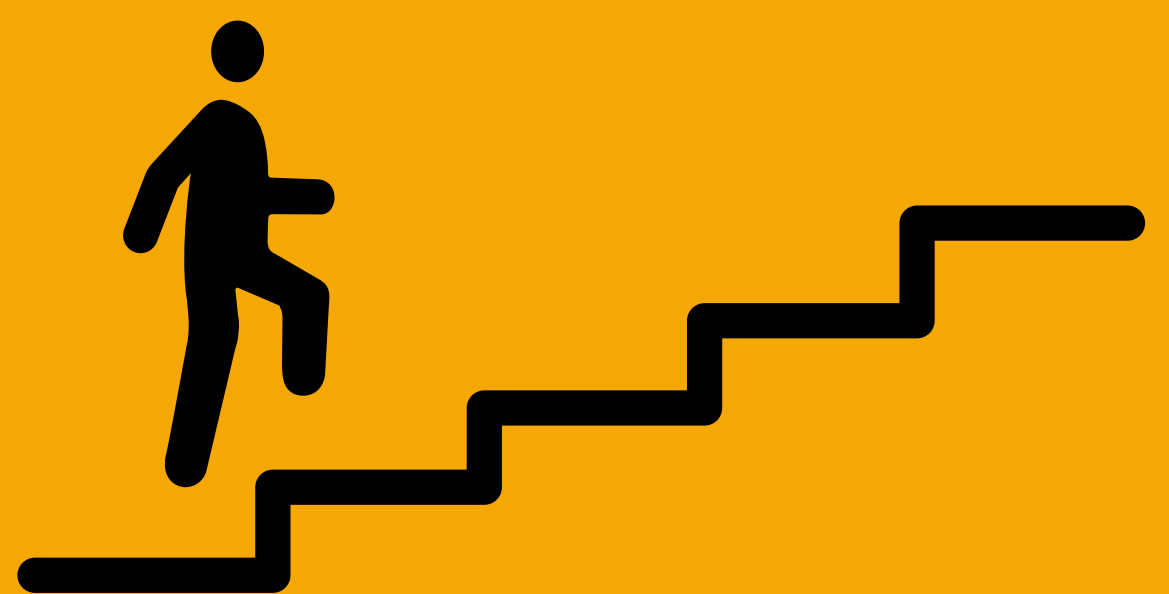
Idea: The IEP Meeting is a Process

Typically, the IEP meeting is going to follow an agenda that is outlined by the order of each IEP form that is discussed

Remember...

- Assessment drives present levels of performance
- Present levels share the success and needs of the students,
- The needs drive IEP goals,
- The goals drive what services and accommodations are necessary to meet the goals, and
- The services determine the placement of the student

Each step in the process builds on the previous step, providing the IEP team valuable information in developing the IEP as a whole. Jumping from one area to another will not give you the full picture of the student. The process must be followed!



IEP Agenda - Sample

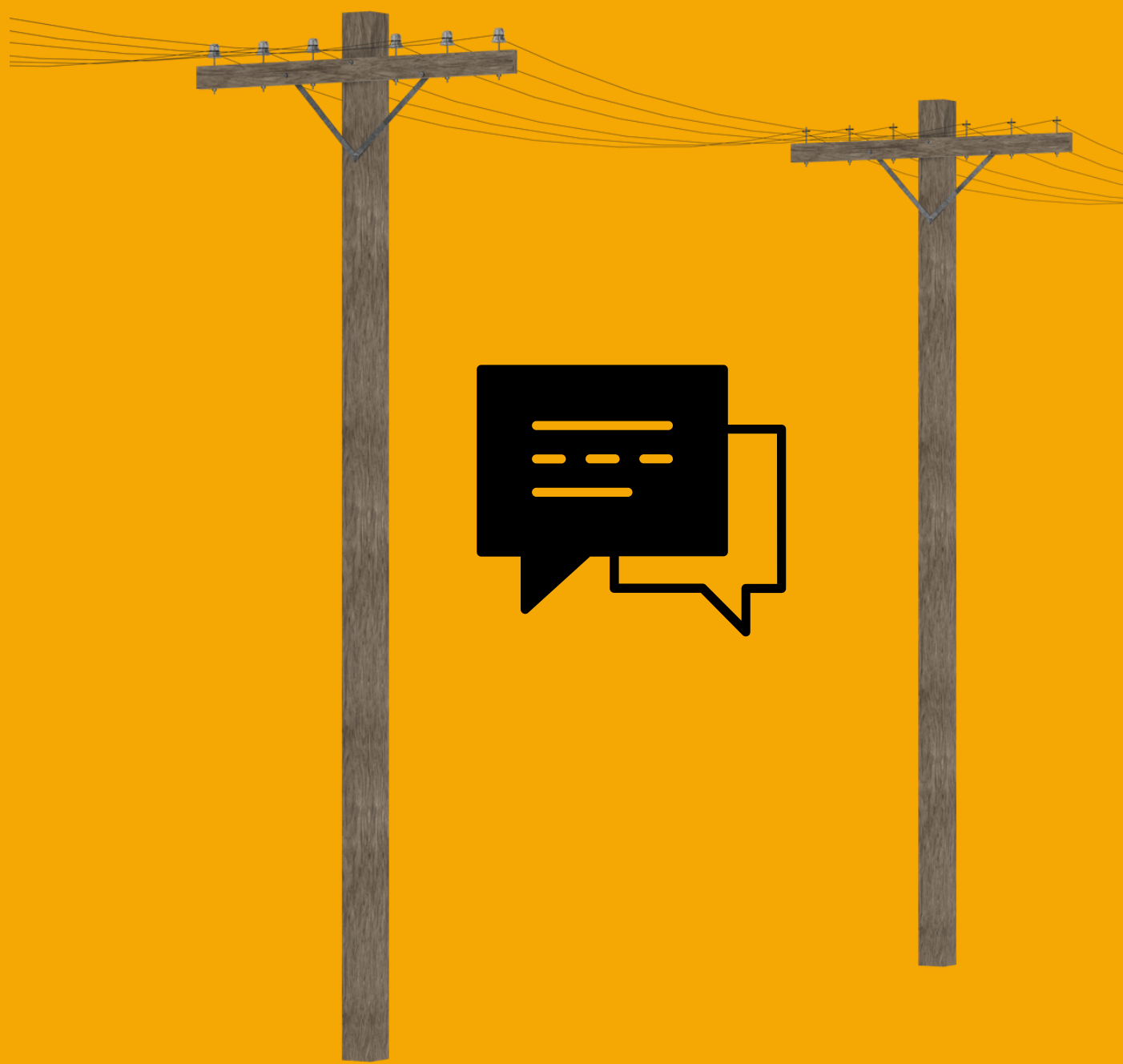
1. Introductions
2. Meeting Norms (agreed upon by the team)
3. Procedural Safeguards (reviewed)
4. Purpose of the Meeting (annual, triennial, other)
 - a. Assessment Results (if applicable)
 - b. Eligibility (if applicable)
5. IEP Review
 - a. Special Factors
 - b. Transition (if applicable)
 - c. Present Levels
 - d. Statewide Assessments
 - e. Goals
 - f. Services/Offer of FAPE
 - g. Review Notes
6. Obtain Signatures/Consent

You should know that you do not have to sign the IEP or agree to the IEP at the meeting. You do have the option to take it home and review it for up to 7 days following the meeting.



Tips for Maintaining a Positive IEP Environment

- Have a positive attitude - go in with a collaboration mindset
- Give and expect treatment with respect; try to model the behavior you would like to see in others.
- Acknowledge that everyone on the team has feelings and perspectives that may be different from your own...and that's okay!
- Keep your child as the focus of the IEP process; the child is the reason we are all here!



- Involve your child whenever possible. Having the student being part of the meeting (if possible) is a great way to get information.
- If you have goals in mind and let the team know what they are, in advance (if possible)
- **Remember** that the team is there to make your child successful!!
- **Remember**, you share a common goal
- Keep the lines of communication open!!



Tips for being Thoughtful: Take your Time

- IEPs should never be rushed; rushing makes for poor decisions
- If you feel like you are running out of time, ask the team to reconvene, if necessary, to allow more time for you to review evaluation results, draft IEP and proposed goals.
- The final IEP document does not have to be signed at the IEP meeting
- However, if you do agree to certain things and not others, it is best to agree at that time with exception of the others, as nothing can be started on the new IEP until there is agreement.
- If you disagree with the whole IEP, then indicate such and the team will need to reconvene
- If you disagree with only one goal and agree with the rest, the option of listing the exception is best so the IEP can be implemented and the team can come back together to discuss the one goal



Idea: Follow up and Check in

- If there are any questions regarding the IEP meeting or document, don't be afraid to contact the case manager to discuss and/or clarify.
- If something needs to change on the IEP, the team may need to reconvene as it is a team determination to change anything on the IEP.
- As a Parent, you could:
 - Review the results of the meeting with your child, if appropriate.
 - Check that new services or resources were put in place.
 - Verify the related service providers have seen the current IEP (if appropriate).
 - Periodically check the IEP against school work for consistency.
 - Monitor homework and support your child as needed for completion.
- Keeping the lines of communication open and clear is the best way to make sure that we are all understood and working towards the best interest of the student.

