

# Facilitating IEP Meetings

Promoting collaborative Individualized Education Program meetings as a preventative measure

## Role of the IEP Facilitator

The state-sponsored facilitator is a neutral third party trained in facilitation techniques but is not an employee of the school district, a member of the IEP team, or an advocate for any person on the team.

### Main Goal

The facilitator will maintain the focus of the IEP meeting on what really matters – the student's individual needs – while:

- ✓ Proposing group norms to provide structure and focus for the meeting
- ✓ Promoting dialogue and encouraging whole team participation for decision making while not imposing a decision on the group
- ✓ Acknowledging and addressing differing opinions in a respectful and neutral manner

“The facilitator developed a written agenda and group meeting norms for the IEP meeting. Being the visual person I am, referencing your charts as we moved through the discussion was extremely helpful to me.”

- Parent

## IEP Facilitation

State-sponsored facilitation is a voluntary process in which a third party (facilitator) guides the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting to help maintain open communication and keep the IEP team members focused on developing a mutually acceptable IEP. Facilitation is a free service.

Parents of children with known or suspected disabilities and/or school personnel have the right to request facilitation services from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).



## Benefits of a Facilitated IEP Meeting

- May build and improve relationships among IEP team members and between parents and schools
- Enhances effective communication and listening within the group
- Provides opportunities for team members to resolve conflicts, if they arise
- Clarifies points of agreement and disagreement
- Encourages all team members to share in the responsibility of developing the IEP
- Maintains focus on the needs of the child

Be open to consider other ideas or solutions!



Listen to learn even if you don't agree!

## Preparing for the Meeting

- Be prepared to talk with the facilitator prior to the IEP meeting.
- If requested, email the current IEP or draft, as well as any recent evaluation data to assist in discussion and planning.
- Prepare a list of issues to discuss and questions to ask, as needed.

## District Responsibilities

The school district retains responsibility for following special education requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Illinois Administrative Code.

## Parent Rights

All parent rights, notifications, and procedural safeguards are still applicable — as with any other IEP meeting.

The IEP document is enforceable through the state complaint process or a due process hearing.



"It was the most productive IEP meeting I have ever attended. Now I understand my role and the roles of each of the IEP team members."

- Parent



"Having a facilitator guide a process where everyone is on the same page is invaluable. Using visual agendas, getting consensus along the way, and building relationships as a team was dynamic. We are all here for the same reason ... to support the student."

- School Staff Member

## Contact

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