


# A FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS ON: HELPING YOUR CHILD DURING A SPECIAL EDUCATION IEP MEETING

An **Individualized Education Program** (IEP) is a document to help your child do his best in school. The IEP is written if your child qualifies for special education services. You learn this by testing and evaluation. The IEP is written at a special meeting by you; one regular education teacher; one special education teacher; a person from the school district; an individual who can help you understand the evaluation; and other individuals who may know special things about the child. Your child may attend the meeting when appropriate.

The IEP may be changed as your child's needs change. But, it is important to understand the IEP process in order to best help your child. Below are some things to think about when you meet with teachers and school officials in an IEP meeting:

- ◇ Make sure that the meeting happens at a time when you can be there. The school is required by law to make the meeting convenient to you. Let your child's teachers know if it's a bad time or if you can't get there. The school must work around your schedule.
  - ◇ The school must inform you in advance of the purpose of every IEP meeting and tell you who will be there and what will be discussed. You are allowed to bring anyone else who has a special interest in your child. Make sure you let the school know whom you intend to bring with you before the meeting.
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- ◇ Write down a list of things you have noticed at home about your child that may have something to do with how he or she will act in the classroom. It might help your child's teachers to know how well your child pays attention, finishes tasks, and remembers things at home.
  - ◇ Look over the goals set out in the IEP. Make sure it is clear how you and the school will know if your child has met his or her goals. It is better if the goals are very specific instead of general. This will

make sure everyone can tell if your child is succeeding. Changes can be easily made along the way if needed.

- ◇ Make sure you understand how much time your child will spend in the regular classroom. By law, school officials must educate your child in the “least restrictive environment” possible. This means that your child will spend as much time with non-disabled children as possible while still receiving special instruction.
- ◇ The IEP will be updated every year, but you have the right to ask for changes at any time. Make sure you talk about how teachers will let you know how your child is doing.
- ◇ Ask about other related services for your child in addition to traditional special education, including speech therapy and behavior therapy.
- ◇ Don’t be afraid to ask questions if you are unclear about parts of the IEP. Everyone involved in the process should have the same understanding of what is expected of them when the meeting is over.

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This is not all the information you need to know if you have questions about special education laws in our state. You may want to talk to a lawyer about your individual situation. If you don't have a lawyer, the South Carolina Bar Lawyer Referral Service can give you the name of a lawyer who is willing to meet with you and advise you at a lower rate. For the name of a lawyer in your area, call the Lawyer Referral Service at (800) 868-2284 (statewide) or 799-7100 in Columbia and Lexington counties. If you have a very low income, your local legal services office may be able to help you. To get in touch with them, call the Legal Assistance Telephone Intake Service for a referral at 744-9430 in Columbia or toll-free, (888) 346-5592 from other places in the state.

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