



IEP Team Meetings

This fact sheet talks about IEP meetings, the laws around them and the rights of students and parents.

What is an IEP?

An Individual Education Program (IEP) is the plan for your child’s education and other special needs. It is made with input from a group of people. That group includes:

- the child’s parents,
- case manager,
- teachers,
- school administration staff (like a principal or special education director), and
- sometimes other service providers like social workers, occupational therapists, or speech therapists

This group meets to create the IEP and meets to update or change it if needed. These are called IEP team meetings.



Do I need to ask for an IEP team meeting for anything that happens at school?

No. You don’t need an IEP team meeting for everything that happens at school. If there is a problem in one class probably a “parent-teacher” conference or a phone conversation is enough. This might be something like grades falling or a disciplinary issue. But, if there is a pattern that worries you, it might be a good time for an IEP team meeting. It could be something like your child’s grades in several classes changed or they seem to be getting more disciplined in all areas. You or the school can always ask to have an IEP team meeting.

Scheduling the IEP Team Meeting

Under the [Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act \(IDEA\)](#), the school must make sure that one or both of the parents are at each IEP team meeting. Or have been given the chance to be part of the meeting. This means the school must tell the parents about the meeting with enough time so they can plan to be there. The meeting should be scheduled at a time and in a place that you and the school agree to. This is called a “mutually agreed upon time and place,” which is required in the law.¹ For example, a parent can’t demand an IEP team meeting for tomorrow. Or the school can’t put off an IEP team meeting for months after a parent has asked for one.

Usually, if a parent asks for an IEP team meeting, the school suggests 2 or 3 options within the next 2 weeks.

Most IEP team meetings are scheduled for 1 -3 hours, depending on how many issues there are to talk about. Schools can put time limits on them so staff can keep up with their other job duties. Parents and school staff should agree on how long the meeting should be before it starts. If the meeting time runs out, you can schedule a follow-up meeting on another day.

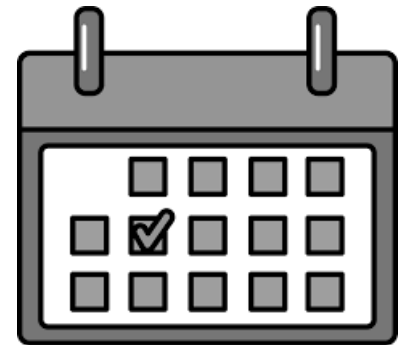
You and the school can agree to meet in person at the school, or a virtual meeting like Zoom, or a conference call. The meetings normally must be during the school day. Sometimes, in rare cases or extreme situations, the school may hold the IEP team meeting before or after the school day.

How often do we have to have IEP meetings?

There is no limit to the number of IEP team meetings that a parent or school can ask for in a school year. But there are times when the law says the IEP team has to meet.

The IEP team must meet at least once a school year to revise the IEP.²

The IEP team must also meet when a “manifestation determination” is necessary. This is when a student is removed from school for 10 or more school days.



When is a meeting not required?

There are times when a school doesn't have to call for an IEP team meeting. If a parent doesn't want their child evaluated for an IEP, the school can't move forward. Also, if a parent doesn't want their child to get any special education services, the school can't move forward.³

The school doesn't have to have an IEP meeting³ if:

- a parent doesn't want their child evaluated for an IEP or
- a parent doesn't want their child to get any special education services

Schools don't have to hold IEP meetings over school breaks like summer break. But [MN law](#) says that schools must have IEP documents ready at the beginning of each school year.⁴ For this reason, IEP meetings are regularly held at the end of the school year. Then the IEPs can be ready for the start of the next school year.

The IEP team must meet once a year to make updates to the IEP. But if changes are needed at other times they can be made without a physical meeting.⁵

If you and the school agree to make other changes without another team meeting, they can write up a document that changes the child's current IEP.⁶ The school has to make sure that the whole IEP team is told about the changes.⁷ Changing IEPs without a meeting is usually best for small changes like making 30 minutes of speech language services a week to 20 minutes a week.

If there is a major change to the child's program, such as moving to a more restrictive environment, a full IEP team meeting should be convened. If your child experiences a sudden change in grades, psychiatric enrollment, or other big changes that affect their education, the IEP team should have a meeting to decide if there needs to be a change to the child's IEP.⁸

Who comes to an IEP team meeting?

By law, certain people must be at IEP meetings:

- Parent(s)⁹
- Special education teacher or representative
- School administration representative, like a principal or dean. They serve as a "public agency representative"
- Classroom teacher(s)
- Other people that the parent or school choose to bring who have special knowledge of the child¹⁰
- For children ages 14+, the child's "meaningful input" is encouraged, but not mandatory.¹¹

These people make up the IEP team. This means that all these people need to be at a meeting when there are important decisions to make about the child's IEP. But the parent can give the okay to excuse certain people on the IEP team who can't be there. For example, if a general education teacher can't go to a meeting, they can give written notice that they can't go. They should also write out important information that they want to share with the IEP team if they have any. If a parent says this is okay in writing, the team can have the meeting without the general education teacher.



It might be necessary to have other people at the meeting in special circumstances. For example, if the IEP team is reviewing evaluation results, the law says a school psychologist must be at the meeting. If the student is transitioning to another grade or building in the 1-2 months after the IEP team meeting, it is good to invite the teachers or providers the student will have. Parents can choose to bring any other person to the IEP meeting.¹² You may wish to include a friend, family member, or advocate outside the closed education structure.

Can I block people from going to an IEP meeting?

Parents can ask that a specific person can go or not go to the IEP team meeting. But there is no legal right to force or block someone from going to an IEP team meeting. For example, if you think the principal is biased against your child, but the principal is the school's designated public agency representative, you do not have a legal right to block the principal from going to the meeting.

Interpreters and Accommodations



A school must do what it takes to make sure the parent understands the proceedings of the IEP team meeting. This includes arranging for an interpreter for parents who are Deaf or hard of hearing or whose native language is not English.¹³ If the parent has their own qualifying disability, the parent has a right to accommodations during the IEP team meeting under [Section 504](#) or the [ADA](#).¹⁴

If you need an interpreter or accommodations for your own disability, ask for them when you ask for an IEP team meeting. If you plan to record the meeting, it is best to tell that to the school when you ask for an IEP team meeting.¹⁵ Some school districts have policies against recording meetings, but schools must provide for exceptions so that a parent is not inhibited in their right to understand an IEP, the process, or to exercise other parental rights.¹⁶ If the parent records the meeting, the school may also audio record the meeting for their own records.

How are IEP team decisions made?

The school and the parents must work together to make changes to the IEP. This includes changing services, goals, and supports. Parents must be given “meaningful participation” in the IEP team meeting and IEP development. “Meaningful participation” means parents must be part of the decision making.

The school district must show that it:

- came to the meeting with an open mind,
- did not decide the student's services or placement prior to the IEP team meeting (also known as “predetermination”), and
- was “receptive and responsive” to the parents' position at all stages, rather than cutting the conversation short when parents express their concerns.¹⁷

IEP decisions and changes are made by consensus, not by voting. “Majority votes” aren’t appropriate.¹⁸ Even though parents play an equal part in the IEP process, they don’t have veto power over the IEP. If the IEP group can’t all agree not come to a consensus, the district may finalize the IEP document as close as possible to what the parties recommend.¹⁹ Parents can challenge the outcome by utilizing dispute resolution tools.²⁰ See our fact sheets [Filing a Special Education Complaint](#) and [The School is Not Helping My Child with Disabilities](#).

Anytime there are amendments to a child’s IEP, the parent(s) have the right to ask for a revised copy that can be mailed or emailed.²¹

More Help

For other resources, contact [PACER Parent Training Center](#):

phone: (952) 838-9000 or (800) 537-2237

email: pacer@pacer.org

Fact Sheets are legal information NOT legal advice. See a lawyer for advice.

Don't use this fact sheet if it is more than 1 year old. Ask us for updates, a fact sheet list, or alternate formats.

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Laws, Statutes, Rules and Regulations

Note: Some of these citations are for special education administrative hearings. There are not always links you can use. The best way to see them is to bring this fact sheet to a meeting with a school official. The school official usually can access the Special Education database.

Scheduling the IEP Team Meeting

1. [34 CFR 300.322 \(a\)](#)

How often do we have to have IEP meetings?

2. [20 USC 1414 \(d\)\(4\)\(A\)](#)
[20 USC 1414 \(d\)\(4\)\(B\)](#)

When is a meeting not required?

3. [20 U.S.C. § 1414\(3\)\(b\)\(B\)](#)
4. [Minn. Stat. 125a.08\(a\)](#)

Special Education Complaint 23-157C on behalf of A. M. A. from Rochester 0535-01 (July 2024), available at: <https://law.justia.com/cases/minnesota/court-of-appeals/2024/a23-1442.html>

5. [34 CFR 300.324\(a\)\(4\)\(i\)](#)
6. [34 CFR 300.324\(a\)\(4\)\(i\)](#)
7. [34 CFR 300.324 \(a\)\(4\)\(ii\)](#)
8. [20 U.S.C. §1414\(c\)\(5\)](#)
[34 C.F.R. 300.534\(c\)\(1\)](#)
[34 C.F.R. § 300.536\(b\)](#)

Who comes to an IEP team meeting?

9. Under the [Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act \(IDEA\)](#), a parent is ([34 CFR 300.30 \(a\)](#)):
 - A biological or adoptive parent of a child
 - A foster parent, unless state law, regulations, or contractual obligations with a state or local entity prohibit a foster parent from acting as a parent
 - A guardian generally authorized to act as the child's parent or authorized to make educational decisions for the child (but not the state if the child is a ward of the state)
 - An individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative) with whom the child lives or an individual who is legally responsible for the child's welfare
 - A surrogate parent who has been appointed in accordance with [34 CFR 300.519](#) or [20 USC 1439 \(a\)\(5\)](#).

For separated or divorced parents, a school will follow any court orders or judicial decrees that restrict or set forth specific guidelines regarding a parent's rights. For example, in *Cape Henlopen Sch. Dist.*, 114 LRP 35279 (SEA DE 08/04/14), the district invited a divorced father to his son's IEP meeting, answered his questions, and offered to help structure the 11-year-old's activities. However, because a state court order expressly granted

educational decision-making power only to the mother, the district wasn't required to consider the father's input in the development of the student's IEP and placement.

10. [20 U.S.C. § 1414 and 34 CFR 300.321](#)
11. [34 CFR 300.321 \(a\)\(1\)](#)
[34 CFR 300.322](#)
12. [34 C. F. R. § 300.321](#)

Interpreters and Accommodations

13. [34 CFR 300.322 \(e\)](#)
14. [34 CFR 104](#)
[34 CFR 104.3 \(k\)\(4\)](#)
[28 CFR 35.130](#)
15. [Letter to Anonymous, 40 IDELR 70 \(OSEP 2003\)](#). This says that if the use of recording devices is prohibited or limited in a state, the school district still must make exceptions for a parent who needs a recording to understand the IEP or the IEP process.
16. OSEP stated that if an agency chooses to limit or prohibit the use of recording devices, it must provide for exceptions so that a parent is not inhibited in her right to understand an IEP, the process, or to exercise other parental rights. [Letter to Anonymous, 40 IDELR 70 \(OSEP 2003\)](#).

How are IEP team decisions made?

17. [R.L. v. Miami-Dade County School Board, 63 IDELR 182 \(11th Cir. 2014\)](#).
18. [20 U.S.C. Section 1414](#)
19. If the team can't reach an agreement, the school district must give the parents written notice of the school's proposals or refusals, or both, about the child's educational program. The following links support this.
[34 CFR 300.503 \(a\)](#)
[Letter to Richards, 55 IDELR 107 \(OSEP 2010\)](#)
[Garden Grove Unified Sch. Dist., 115 LRP 20924 \(SEA CA 05/05/15\), aff'd, 67 IDELR 229, \(C.D. Cal. 2016\)](#). Although the mother argued that the district did not incorporate all of her input in the student's IEP, the administrative law judge commented that "the parents of a child with a disability do not have a veto power over the proceeding."
20. [34 CFR 300.324 \(a\)\(6\)](#)
21. [34 CFR 300.503 \(a\)](#)