

Being an Effective IEP Team Member: A Checklist for Parents

- Your child's teacher or school administrator should contact you to determine when you are available to attend an IEP meeting.** Once a date and time for the meeting has been set, the district must send you official, written notice stating the date, time and location of the meeting and who will attend the meeting. You are required to indicate whether or not you will attend the meeting and then return the form to the district. If you are not available to attend the meeting on the date and/or at time the district has specified, you should list dates and times when you would be available. You should also list the names of anyone who will accompany you to the meeting. Keep a copy of the form for your records.
- Request that the school district give you copies of all reports of assessments, evaluations, teacher summaries, and progress reports** for your child at least one week before the IEP meeting is scheduled so that you have time to read them and ask questions about any reports you do not understand or do not agree with.
- Provide the school district with current educational and/or medical reports, assessments and evaluations that you may have and that are relevant to your child's educational needs.** You may choose to withhold medical and other information that is not related to your child's educational needs.
- If you have not already done so, it is helpful to compile a notebook of all your child's records** including all education records (previous IFSP's, IEPs, assessments, diagnostic evaluations, reports from teachers and service providers) and medical records (doctors' reports, immunization records, therapists' reports). Contact CARE Parent Network at (800) 281-3023 or (925) 313-0999 for notebook resources and information on how to compile and organize a notebook.
- Complete the CARE Parent Network IEP worksheet.**
You are a vital member of your child's IEP team. The worksheet will help you describe your child's strengths and needs and help you provide input when your child's educational goals, programs, services and placements are discussed by the IEP team. Attend an IEP training and learn about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), free and appropriate education (FAPE), least restrictive environment (LRE) and your rights under the law. Contact CARE Parent Network for training opportunities.
- Make arrangements with the district to visit school programs** that the IEP team may consider for your child. In addition, elementary, middle and high schools usually hold an open house in the spring. Preschools may hold an open house as well. An open house is an excellent time to see a school, walk through classrooms and meet teachers and families whose children attend the school.
- Whether this IEP meeting is the first one you will attend for your child or the 10th one you have attended, here are some things that you always should do:**
 - Put everything in writing. Email is sufficient, but be sure to keep all copies of emails that you send and receive.
 - Have your spouse or other adult family member or friend attend the meeting with you. It is helpful to know that you have support.
 - Take a copy of the new IEP home to read and review before you sign to indicate your agreement. If you request to take the IEP home to read and review, the district will still ask you to sign the IEP before you leave the meeting to indicate that you attended the meeting. Be sure to write "in attendance" after your signature to make it clear that your signature does not represent consent to the IEP. After you have reviewed the IEP and requested and agreed to any changes (if needed), the district will ask you to sign to indicate your acceptance.
- Get to know your child's new teacher as soon as possible.**
You can request that your child meet his/her new teacher and see his/her new classroom before your child's first day in the class. It can also be useful to write a short narrative about your child to share with his/her new teacher. You can use the information about your child's personality, likes, dislikes, strengths and challenges that you included on the CARE Parent Network IEP worksheet in preparation for the IEP meeting.
- Contact Care Parent Network** for information, resources and to ask questions about the IEP process.
(800) 281-3023 or (925) 313-0999



A Summary of Some Parents' Rights under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004)

- Parents have the right to review and obtain copies of all of their child's school records, assessments and reports. You should request copies be given to you before the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting for you to review.
- Parents have the right to be notified in writing before the IEP meeting of the date and time of the meeting and who will attend. You may request an IEP meeting be rescheduled if you or someone who you want to have accompany you to the meeting are unable to attend on the date and time suggested by the school district.
- Parents have the right to invite anyone to attend the IEP meeting who has knowledge or expertise regarding their child (for example, an expert, friend, relative, advocate, lawyer). You must notify the school district in advance of who will be in attendance.
- In general, anyone who attends the IEP meeting must have knowledge of the child or the programs and services that may be recommended for the child. You should make sure that someone who represents and can act on behalf of the district administration in the IEP process will attend the meeting.
- Parents may tape record the IEP meeting as long as they notify the school district at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.
- Parents are equal participants with the school district in developing the IEP. You may give input on your views of your child's strengths, weaknesses and educational needs. You may write goals and objectives for the IEP and/or suggest changes in goals and objectives written by the district.
- Parents may request that the IEP clearly specify types, amounts, duration and frequency of services. You may request that vague terms like "small group" be clearly defined (for example, you might request that "small group" be defined as 3 or fewer children).
- Parental consent is required before the district may implement the IEP. You do not have to give your consent to the IEP at the IEP meeting. You may sign that you are "in attendance" and request a complete copy of the IEP document to take home and review. You do not have to consent to the entire IEP. You can approve parts of the IEP and identify (in writing) items that are not resolved and will be followed up at another meeting.
- When the IEP is signed by the parents and the school district it is a legal document. The district must provide the programs and services as specified in the IEP, and the district may not change the services or your child's placement without an IEP meeting to modify the existing IEP.
- IEP meetings must be held at least once a year. You have the right to request an IEP meeting be held whenever you think it is necessary to discuss your child's progress, programs or services.



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