



According to IDEA, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team must consist of members who work together to determine the best strategies to meet the student's unique disability needs. This team is a collaborative group who seek to find ways to support the student. The IEP team is made up of the following team members (required members are in bold font):

- ▶ **Local Education Agency Representative:** Must be knowledgeable of the general education curriculum, be able to supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities, and be knowledgeable of the availability of district resources;
- ▶ **General Education Teacher:** Must be knowledgeable of the general education curriculum, able to provide input on the supports the student needs to be successful, and have the student in class (if participating or may participate in the general education environment);
- ▶ **Special Education Teacher:** Must be appropriately certified and have expertise in specially designed instruction and IEP development and documentation;
- ▶ **Parents:** Must meet the definition of parent. The parent serves as the expert on their child in the home and community and are required critical members of the IEP team;
- ▶ **Student:** Must be invited to IEP meetings beginning in 9th grade or age 16, whichever comes first, should be encouraged to participate in the IEP in order to promote self-advocacy and to provide crucial input on their unique disability related needs, and then, at age 18, IDEA age of majority, consent shifts to the adult student and the adult student must be included as a member of the IEP team;
- ▶ **Qualified Examiner:** (required when evaluations are to be reviewed), Must be qualified to provide insight, meaning, or interpretation of the test scores and can share instructional implications or recommendations based on student unique disability related needs;
- ▶ **Related Service Provider:** (i.e. Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Speech Language Pathologist, Board Certified Behavioral Analyst) should be present if the student receives related services to meet their unique disability related needs in order to provide updates on present levels and input on how to best support the student through the IEP;
- ▶ **Persons at the request of parent:** Must have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student (as determined by the parent). When invited by the parent, an advocate, friend, or relative, are allowed to come with the parent to a meeting to provide additional support and insight about the student;
- ▶ **Others:** Must include other individuals, as appropriate, such as transition specialist, bus drivers, counselors, school nurse, etc., who can provide important information about how to best support the full needs of the student.



In order to achieve an effective IEP meeting in which all voices are valued and true collaboration occurs, a team may implement one or more of the strategies detailed below.

- › **Plan ahead.** When the need for an IEP meeting is approaching, plan ahead to ensure that all team members can be present. It is critical to make time to ask team members ahead of the meeting for input. Forms that can be used include the IEP Planning Document for Families (Annual or Non Annual) and the General Education Teacher Questionnaire.
- › **Be prepared for the meeting.** Having the appropriate space and amenities allows for a much more comfortable and inviting environment. The meeting location should have an adequate number of seats and comfortable space for all team members. Make sure that there are amenities such as pens, tissues, and any necessary technology.
- › **Have an agenda.** When a meeting agenda is in place, it allows the team to know the specific tasks at hand. Ensure the team agrees with the agenda for the meeting and make adjustments if necessary. If subjects that are not on the agenda come up, appropriately document them in parent concerns, if appropriate, or put them in a parking lot (strategy detailed below) to come back to at the end of the meeting. A sample agenda can be seen here.
- › **Utilize a parking lot.** Often in meetings a topic might get brought up that does not need to be addressed at the time mentioned in the meeting for one or more reasons, such as not relevant to the IEP or will be touched on later in the meeting. Rather than derailing the meeting and getting off topic, write the question, comment, or concern on a board or paper that you designate as the “parking lot” and come back to it at the end of the meeting.
- › **Ensure that all team members know their role.** Take the time to have team members introduce themselves and explain their role in the IEP meeting. If a team member does not understand the purpose of their presence on the IEP team, support them by explaining their expertise on the team.
- › **Designate responsibilities within the team.** Giving team members specific roles within the team, such as a time keeper, a note taker, a meeting facilitator, etc. can support the functionality of the IEP team. It spreads the expectations of team members and allows more individuals to play critical roles, while also ensuring that meeting flows effectively.
- › **Use technology.** Printed documents are also difficult for the entire team to see and provide input. Appropriately using a projector, smartboard, or other technology allows for prompt edits to the draft documents and easily visible documents to support the entirety of the team. In EDPlan, all documents can now be signed digitally, as well.



Concerns that arise from a team member should be documented and addressed by the team during the meeting. If the concern cannot be resolved in the meeting, a plan for resolution must be considered.

- › **Concerns of parents.** The IEP team is required to document the concerns that a parent presents in the IEP. Time should be given to allow parents to share any concern. The team should determine what a reasonable course of action may be to resolve the concern of the parents. Best practice would note in the parent concerns section how these concerns are being addressed.
- › **Concerns from other team members.** When other team members share concerns in the IEP team meeting these should be documented on the comment form, attached to the IEP document, and addressed by the team.

When conflict arises in an IEP meeting, the team must work diligently work to resolve the issue and strive to meet the student's needs. Some strategies include:

- › **Use the data.** Focus on the data relevant to the issue at hand to make informed decisions.
- › **Focus on consensus.** The purpose of an IEP team meeting is to meet the educational needs of the student. IEP teams should work collaboratively but they are not a democracy. The team should work together to find a find a solution to best meet the educational needs of the student.
- › **Hear before you speak.** Take time to listen to all voices at the table before sharing your thoughts.
- › **Ask clarifying questions and or rephrase.** If a statement is made that seems to cause conflict or division within the team, re-phrase the comment as a question in such a way that the team may find a better understanding of the way the individual is feeling. This helps ensure that the individual is understood correctly; and therefore, can be responded to respectfully and appropriately.
- › **Be professional and kind.** IEP meetings can often be a very personal and emotional experience for team members. It is important to show professionalism and be respectful to all team members, even in difficult circumstances.

An effective IEP team meeting takes effort and a collaborative attitude from all team members. An efficient meeting comes from planning ahead to ensure that the student receives the supports and services necessary for positive educational progress.

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