

Additional Resources for Module Two

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Other Assets

Addressing Difficult Conversations at IEP Meetings

Check Perceptions:

Take the time to ask, identify, and understand the perceptions of other IEP team members.

Reflect:

Consider and think carefully about what has been shared/discussed during the meeting.

Ask Open-Ended Questions:

Encourage active dialogues and a richer discussion by asking open-ended questions.

Paraphrase:

Without using the exact words of the other speaker or losing the meaning, provide a general summary overview of what was shared.

Observe Body Language:

Take the time to notice any nonverbal behavior throughout the meeting and address any needs accordingly.

Practice Active Listening:

Listen carefully to what is being shared during the meeting so that you can understand, remember, and respond appropriately.

Example Meeting Norms for the IEP Meeting

1. Be respectful of everybody's time by starting and ending the meeting on time.
2. Only one person may speak at a time.
3. Silence all cell phones and minimize distractions.
4. Remain open-minded and nonjudgmental throughout the meeting.
5. Everyone participates, and no one dominates the meeting.

Common Barriers and Solutions to Building Trust Between Families and Professionals During the IEP Meeting Process

Barrier: Mistaking silence of the family for agreement and understanding.

Solution: Check with the family (and all IEP team members) for agreement and understanding before moving on to another area of the IEP.

Barrier: Sharing information during the IEP meeting verbally only, without visual support of the information shared.

Solution: Always provide visual support for IEP team members to be able to follow along with the information provided through all stages of the process.

Barrier: Responding to families without taking the time to process what was shared.

Solution: After a family member (or any IEP team member has shared), allow a few moments to take the time to process what was shared, and reflect it back to the person.

Barrier: Talking directly to the student's mother only.

Solution: Talk to all family members present, and all IEP team members as well.

Barrier: Failure to provide opportunities for team discussion.

Solution: Allow time during the meeting to discuss as a team, including asking team members to share input before moving onto other sections. Reschedule to another time (if more time is needed).

Barrier: Speaking in jargon/using acronyms

Solution: Eliminate jargon/acronyms; provide a definition of what you are discussing; provide families with a related glossary of special education terminology/acronyms.

Barrier: Failure to walk into meeting with the family.

Solution: It creates a more welcoming message when all IEP team members enter the room and begin the meeting together.

Barrier: Using deficit-based or only age norming language to describe a student's needs.

Solution: Instead describe the student's needs and the necessary skills associated with meeting that need.

Barrier: Turning the IEP meeting into an adult read aloud.

Solution: Provide families with their own copies of all documentation shared, and summarize the information needed to be shared in a meaningful and understandable way.

Barrier: Forgetting about the "I" in individualized education program

Solution: Remember the student should always be at the center of the discussion. All discussion and identified areas of need should be individualized for the student.



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Communication Strategies to Facilitate Equity for Families During the Individualized Education Program Meeting Process

- Provide family members opportunities to contribute to each agenda issue.
- If the family is from another culture, provide them with a cultural broker. A cultural broker is described as someone from the student/family culture to act as an intermediary and advocate between family and professionals.
- Prior to moving ahead onto another section of the IEP meeting agenda, ask open-ended questions of family members.
- Practice understanding the family perspective during student needs discussion.
- Monitor all IEP meeting participation and keep any person from dominating the discussion.
- Encourage questions from all team members throughout the IEP team meeting.
- Throughout the meeting, ask families open-ended questions, and pay attention to verbal and nonverbal cues.



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