

# IEP Facilitation



Individualized Education Program (IEP) Facilitation\* is an option available to parents and school staff when they both agree that it would be valuable to have a neutral person — the IEP facilitator — present at an IEP meeting to assist them in discussing issues regarding the IEP. The IEP facilitator assists in creating an atmosphere for fair communication and the successful drafting of an IEP for the student. Facilitation services are also available for Individualized Family Support Program (IFSP) meetings for birth-3 Early Intervention, Preschool Early Intervention, and Gifted IEP (GIEP) meetings for students who are gifted.

IEP/IFSP/GIEP/504 Facilitations are state-sponsored options and do not delay or deny the right to due process, mediation, or any other IDEA requirement.

\*Includes IFSP, GIEP, and 504



## Role of the Facilitator

The facilitator:

- Does not chair the meeting or write the IEP.
- Helps the team focus on the student's needs.
- May help create an overall agenda and assist in generating ground rules for the meeting, with the agreement of all team members.
- Assists the team to resolve conflicts and disagreements that arise during the meeting. The facilitator typically does not address disputes unrelated to the IEP.
- Helps to maintain open communication among all team members.
- Models effective communication and listening.
- Helps to keep team members on task and within the time allotted for the meeting.
- Maintains impartiality and does not take sides, place blame, or determine whether a particular decision is right or wrong.
- Clarifies points of agreement and disagreement.

- Ensures that the meeting is child/student focused.
- Does not impose a decision on the group.
- Is not a member of the team.

## Benefits of an IEP Facilitation

An IEP Facilitation:

- Builds and improves communication among the team members and between parents and schools.
- Provides opportunities for team members to resolve conflicts if they arise.
- Encourages parents and professionals to identify new options to address unresolved problems.
- Serves as a more cost-efficient mechanism for resolving disputes than more formal proceedings such as due process hearings.
- Is typically a less stressful mechanism for resolving disputes.
- Supports all parties in participating fully.

## Family Preparation for IEP Facilitation

Good preparation is key to a successful meeting. The following suggestions may assist families in preparing. Families can:

- Make a list of your child's strengths and needs and your major concerns about his/her education.
- Prepare a written list of issues you want to discuss and questions you want to ask.
- Consider how your child's disabilities affect his/her education or development.
- Think about whether your child has been making progress with his/her current program. Make a list of what you think has been working and what has not.
- Request a copy of your child's most recent Evaluation Report and plan (IEP, IFSP, GIEP, or 504) from the school or service

coordinator and review it before the meeting to ensure that it is still an accurate and complete picture of your child.

- Be willing to listen carefully and consider possible solutions and options discussed at the meeting.
- Attend a workshop or training conducted by your local Parent and Training Information (PTI) Center (listed on the following page) to learn about your role and responsibilities as a member of the team. A PTI staff member can answer your questions and help you prepare for the meeting.
- Contact the Special Education ConsultLine (800-879-2301) to speak with a specialist who can help you understand your rights regarding your child's services. For questions regarding Early Intervention, contact OCDEL at 717-346-9320.

- Go to <https://odr-pa.org/facilitation/iep-ifsp-facilitation/> for more information and to complete an online request or scan the QR code below. If you need help reading or completing this form, a ConsultLine specialist can read the form aloud and enter in the information you provide.



- Learn more about your role and responsibilities as a member of the team by contacting your local parent training and information (PTI) center for information.
  - **Parent Education and Advocacy Leadership Center** (866-950-1040)
  - **Mission Empower** (855-825-0788)
  - **Hispanos Unidos para Niños Excepcionales/ Philadelphia** (215-425-6203)

## Frequently Asked Questions About IEP Facilitation

### How do I request IEP Facilitation?

Either the parents or the program/school can request IEP Facilitation and submit it to the Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR); however, since the process is voluntary, both sides must agree. This form is available from ODR, or online at ODR's website ([www.odr-pa.org](http://www.odr-pa.org)).

### When are IEP Facilitations scheduled?

Teams interested in IEP Facilitation should submit the completed and signed request forms to the Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) as soon as they know they would like a facilitator at the meeting. ODR prefers the request to be made at least two weeks prior to the meeting. However, ODR understands that IEP meetings are sometimes scheduled within a shorter time frame. ODR will make every attempt to locate a facilitator who is available in the time frame chosen by the team. If no facilitator is available on this date, the team may need to reschedule the meeting or proceed without the facilitator. Just as for any IEP meeting, the IEP Facilitation meeting is scheduled by the program/school at a time and place that is mutually agreeable to all required team members.

### How will I be notified about the IEP Facilitation meeting?

Notification about an IEP Facilitation meeting is the same as any other IEP meeting. The program/school is still required to give proper notice of the IEP meeting to the parents, including the purpose, time, location, and list of who has been invited.

### Who attends the IEP Facilitation meeting?

Attendance at an IEP Facilitation meeting is the same as any other IEP meeting. The required members of the team attend the meeting, in addition to the facilitator. As with nonfacilitated IEP meetings, parents have the option to invite an advocate or other people who have knowledge or special expertise regarding their child.

### Is there any cost for the IEP Facilitation meeting?

There is no cost to parents, schools, or early intervention programs for IDEA facilitations. For GIEP and Section 504 meetings, the school is responsible for the cost of the facilitation..

### What happens if the IEP Facilitation is not successful?

As with any IEP meeting, if the parties to an IEP Facilitated meeting are not able to resolve the disagreements preventing them from drafting a mutually agreeable plan, they are free to pursue other forms of dispute resolution such as mediation or a due process hearing. IEP facilitation can be used in conjunction with other dispute resolution options as well. You do not need to utilize facilitation before accessing other options.

### Does the IEP facilitator make decisions for the team?

No. The role of the facilitator is to make every effort to ensure that the team is communicating so that the IEP team, not the IEP facilitator, can develop an appropriate IEP for the student. The facilitator also assists by offering suggestions for resolving conflict that may be preventing the team from agreeing on the various components of the plan. The members of the team remain the sole decision makers.

**Office for Dispute Resolution**

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