

# BEST PRACTICES FOR IEPs

*Adam Stein*

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## Scheduling the IEP

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- Schedule annual and triennial IEPs well in advance, allowing time for re-scheduling if needed
- Reserve a room that will accommodate all of the needs of the participants: enough room at the table with chairs for all, electrical outlets for tape recorders, a telephone available for telephone conferencing, etc
- Allow a reasonable amount of time for the IEP meeting.
- Invite all necessary IEP team members:
  - Parent(s)
  - Student, if appropriate
  - Administrator or designee
  - Special education teacher
  - General education teacher
  - Anyone else who has assessed the student for the upcoming IEP or has important information to share
- Include a Request for Parent Information for the IEP Meeting (SELPA Form # 29) with The IEP Meeting Notice form sent to the parent.
- Ask general education teacher(s) to complete the General Education Teacher Input for the IEP (SELPA Form #30).

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## **Prior to the IEP meeting (10 days or less)**

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- Send assessment reports and draft goals and objectives/ benchmarks to the parent ahead of time. In some cases it may be beneficial to schedule time to discuss the report and/or goals and objectives over the phone if the parent has questions.
- Plan to bring assessment reports, student work samples, the special education file, health and attendance information, draft goals and objectives, etc. to share with the team
- Confirm that all necessary team members will be attending the IEP meeting
- Send a copy of the proposed agenda to the parent

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## **The Day of the IEP Meeting**

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- Have water, cups and perhaps snacks available for the meeting.
- Check that the meeting room is set up and everything that is needed is in the room. It is good to have tables/writing surfaces
- Confirm again that all IEP members will be attending
- Decide on seating arrangements. Consider:
  - Having parent sit beside IEP writer/note-taker so parent can read what is written as the meeting progresses
- Avoid status differentials or “us” vs. “them” seating

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## In the IEP Meeting

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- Start on time
- The Administrator or Designee initiates introductions
- The Facilitator briefly explains and defines his/her role at the meeting. The facilitator directs the process of the meeting, ensuring that the agenda, ground rules and timelines are followed.
- Make sure that there is a note taker who records both the family's and the site level personnel's comments
- Review the ground rules for the meeting. Basic rules:
  - No interruptions
  - Respect and dignity
  - Summarizing (not reading) reports in 10 minutes or less
  - Decide how to handle electronic/other interruptions. It is suggested that pagers and phones be turned off to give the meeting its due importance
  - Confidentiality
  - Caucus (private meeting)
  - Consensus (decision making process, not "majority vote")
  - Establish time parameters or constraints; agreement that all participants remain during the whole meeting if at all possible; appoint a time-keeper

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## **In the IEP Meeting**

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- Breaks
- Ask if anyone would like other rules (See Facilitator Tips sheet for more detailed instructions.)
- Review Agenda
- Determine desired outcomes
- Encourage participation from all team members
- Ask open-ended questions
- Be non-judgmental; focus on descriptions of behaviors/ performance instead of labels
- Check for understanding and clarity; ask for specifics, not generalities
- Keep the group focused on the task; re-direct when necessary
- Build on small content agreements
- Reframe emotionally charged statements
- Summarize periodically
- Acknowledge accomplishments
- Confirm agreements
- Determine action plan and schedule for follow-up activities

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## After the IEP

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- Send progress reports home on the goals and objectives at least as often as general education students receive their progress reports.
- If progress or behavior is not going well, communicate that to the family along with suggestions that may help. Enlist their help and support.
- Document all contacts in a contact log.
- Document attendance
- If there will be a change in placement:
  - Contact school administration
  - Contact teacher
  - Enroll child in (new) program
  - Visitation to (new) class/school
  - Transfer records, files, etc., as necessary
  - Distribute copies of IEP and reports to all necessary parties
  - Arrange for transfer of any supplementary aids and services or equipment
  - Arrange for transportation, as needed
  - Follow-up contact with parents
  - Follow-up contact with receiving school and teacher
- Debrief, collect and offer feedback