



Things to Think About!



By Brandan Atkin

Please visit our website at <http://www.snrproject.com> and click on the "FORMS" link to find a collection of forms that will help you in organizing and preparing for your child's IEP.

The US Department of Education has archived an extensive guide on what an IEP is and how to make the program work for you and your child. Please feel free to visit the site at <http://www.ed.gov/parents/needs/peced/iepguide/index.html>

If there is anything that is not discussed in our newsletters and you would like to see it discussed, or you would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list, please contact us at snrproject@hotmail.com

IEP Team Members

By Linda Jorgensen

Under the IDEA Act, an evaluation determines if a child is eligible for special education and related services. If the child is eligible, the law requires that a team of people (the IEP Team) gather to talk about what special instruction and services the child will need to succeed in school. This team **MUST** include at least one of the child's parents and/or legal guardian, the child (if appropriate) as well as school staff and additional experts, if needed.

Together, the IEP team then reviews the information they have gathered that tells them how the child is currently doing in school and what his or her special needs are. If the child has difficulty in reading, paying attention, writing, speaking, behaving appropriately, has individualized transportation or safety issues or other circumstances that need addressing, the team discusses these needs and ways to meet those needs. Decisions made during team meetings are written down in what then becomes that child's Individualized Education Program or IEP. This plan is then used during the school year as a guide in providing the student the best education possible.

Identifying Your IEP Team Members

By law, certain individuals must be consistently involved in writing a child's IEP. Most traditional IEP teams include a specific group of individuals.

Most often these are:

- The child's parents and/or legal guardian
- At least one of the child's special education teachers or providers
- At least one of the child's regular education teachers (if the student is, or may be considering, participating in a regular education environment)
- A representative of the school system, usually one of the administrative staff of the school the child attends
- An individual who can interpret the evaluation results. Usually a Special Education Services Coordinator or, in many cases, the special education teacher.
- The student, if appropriate.

- Representatives of any other agencies that may be responsible for, or pay for, providing transition services (if the student is 16 years or, if appropriate, younger), and
- Other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise about the child.

Not every child has a straightforward IEP. It may be necessary to bring someone with you to the meeting with knowledge or special expertise about your child and/or services or equipment your child may be using outside of the school program. Or, you, the parent, may need someone to assist you in the process. If you believe you need to bring additional Team members to your IEP meeting it is important to notify your coordinator and special education teacher in advance. Bringing extra individuals into the meeting, without prior notice, can often create problems with the main IEP Team members. Be considerate and give school staff prior notice of your intent along with names, titles and profession, if appropriate, of the individuals you would like to include in the IEP Team meeting.

Additional IEP Team Members

Individuals with knowledge or special expertise about your child or their disability may be asked to participate on the IEP Team. Paraprofessionals or related service professionals are often asked to participate with the IEP Team. Most often this includes, but is not limited to:

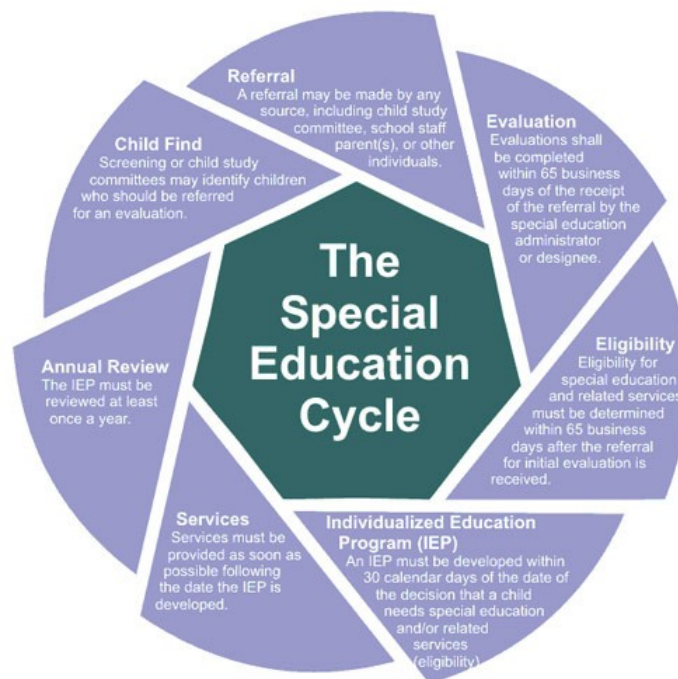
- A parent advocate (to assist the parent through the IEP meeting, if needed)
- An interpreter, if appropriate
- An advocate for the child
- The child's physician or physician's representative
- A private audiologist
- Any one of many therapy specialists (Speech, Occupational, Physical, Recreational, Psychologist, etc.)
- Vocational Educator
- Transportation specialist
- Department of Disability Services Case Manager

The school system may also invite one or more individuals with expertise or specialized knowledge as well.

Documentation

If, for some reason, one of the Team members is unable to attend the IEP meeting you may bring letters, progress notes, recommendations, Physicians orders or other documentation that may be relevant to your child's education plan and the setting where that education takes place. Any information that will help you, the parent, assist the IEP Team in assuring your child receives the best possible education they can give will be appreciated.

The goal of every IEP meeting is to specifically and effectively assist all persons involved in ensuring the best possible education is obtained for your child. IEP meetings are a TEAM effort. Remember. The child, first and foremost.



*Adapted from: A Parent's Guide to Special Education
Virginia Department of Education*