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PARENT FRIENDLY IEP MEETINGS



This content of this presentation reflects general aspects of the law regarding students with disabilities as of the date of its creation. It is not intended to constitute or serve as legal advice for any particular student scenario. Districts should consult legal counsel for advice with regard to specific situations.

We'll support your daily practice.

Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by...

strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families...

have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home.

- IDEA 2004

Learning Targets

- Identify the purpose of an Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Describe IEP team members, their roles, and their important contributions to IEP development
- Explain the importance of parent participation in IEP development
- Be able to prepare for and conduct an effective IEP meeting

Purpose of the IEP

- IEPs describe the educational program designed to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability to prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living
- IEPs state (1) reasonable learning goals for the student and (2) services the school district will provide for the student
- IEPs are legal documents based on IDEA (federal law) and MARSE (Michigan law)
- IEPs are living documents updated at least annually
- IEPs are individualized
- IEPs are a PROCESS, not an EVENT



Required IEP team members:

Parents

- Are experts on their child
- Have ultimate control over whether their child receives special education services
- May be biological, adoptive, step, foster, surrogate, etc. but must meet IDEA & MARSE definition of “parent”
- Typically defaults to the biological parent unless a court order specifies otherwise or the biological parent cannot be found

Are a part of the process from beginning to end!

Required IEP team members:

Special Education Teacher/Provider

- Provides input about student performance in relation to specially-designed instruction
- Typically the designated case manager
- Coordinates the IEP team including related service providers in drafting the IEP
- Seeks input from parent, student, and general educators
- Acts as a liaison between the school and parent during the meeting process
- Typically leads the IEP meeting

Are a part of the process from beginning to end!

Required IEP team members:

*General Education Teacher**

- Should actually teach (or would teach) the student if the child is (or may be) participating in the general education environment
- Knows about:
 - The general education curriculum
 - Student performance in relation to the general education curriculum
 - How the student interacts with peers
 - The pace of the class
 - Other students
 - The dynamics of the class
 - Approaches for teaching the class as a whole
- Are essential in the discussion of LRE

Are a part of the process from beginning to end!

Required IEP team members:

Special Education Designee

- Typically a program supervisor, administrator, or counselor
- Knowledgeable about the general curriculum & district resources
- Able to commit district resources based on student need
- Responsible for providing or supervising the provision of services in the IEP
- May be responsible for publishing the IEP in Illuminate

Are a part of the process from beginning to end!

Required IEP team members:

MET Representative

- Interprets the instructional implications of evaluation results
- This role may be filled by another team member

*Required IEP team members:
Related Service Provider (or others
representing specific services or agencies)*

- Attendance is required when their area is to be discussed
- Provides input about student performance in relation to related services
- May have special expertise regarding the student
- Parent consent must be obtained to invite outside agencies

Required IEP team members: *Student, if appropriate*

- Provides input about their strengths, needs, preferences, and interests
- Must be formally invited to IEP starting with the first IEP to be in effect when they turn 16
- If younger, can attend all or part of the IEP if appropriate

Along with the rights that parents of children with disabilities have, I believe, there are responsibilities associated with that.

The primary responsibility, I believe, is that parents need to be knowledgeable and informed about the special education process.

I believe parents of students with disabilities need to be particularly informed about the IEP process, which serves as the foundation for everything that follows.

...

Knowledge is power and the more knowledge you have regarding the IEP process, the greater the ability you will have as a parent to be an equal partner in your child's education.

- Dr. Ed Steinberg, Former Assistant Director, Colorado Department of Education

Building a Relationship with Parents

- Ongoing communication
- Prompt Responses to emails and phone calls
- Intentional partnership
- Parent interview, questionnaire, or organize prior to the IEP meeting to get their input (share results with team members)
- Consider drafting goals jointly with parents
- Consider discussing something you can work on at school that will make a considerable difference for them at home

Parent engagement at meetings

- Make the IEP process clear and transparent for parents
- Contact following the 3x3 guideline
- Give draft copies before the meeting
- Offer a copy of Michigan's Procedural Safeguards Notice
- Ask for their input at each section of the IEP

What if the parent doesn't speak English?

- Arrange in advance for an interpreter to be at the meeting
- Only use interpreters qualified for interpreting special education discussions

Student Engagement

- Student involvement:

- Poster with the student's picture; people add comments as they enter
- The student attends the discussion of strengths, preferences, and interests
- The student creates a short PowerPoint about themselves
- Person-Centered Planning

<http://wilderwaiteresourceroom.wikispaces.com/Individualized+Education+Planning>

http://www.imdetermined.org/quick_links/modules/module_four

<http://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/independent-community-living/self-determination.asp>

Gen Ed Teacher Engagement

- Help them know & understand their role on the IEP team
- Get input before the IEP meeting
- Give a draft copy of the IEP before the meeting

What if the student doesn't have a Gen Ed teacher?

- The Gen Ed Teacher is required if the student is, or may, participating in the general education setting.
- Students in more restrictive settings may meet this requirement depending on discussion at the IEP
- Gen Ed teachers who would likely teach the student can be used if there is no current Gen Ed teacher

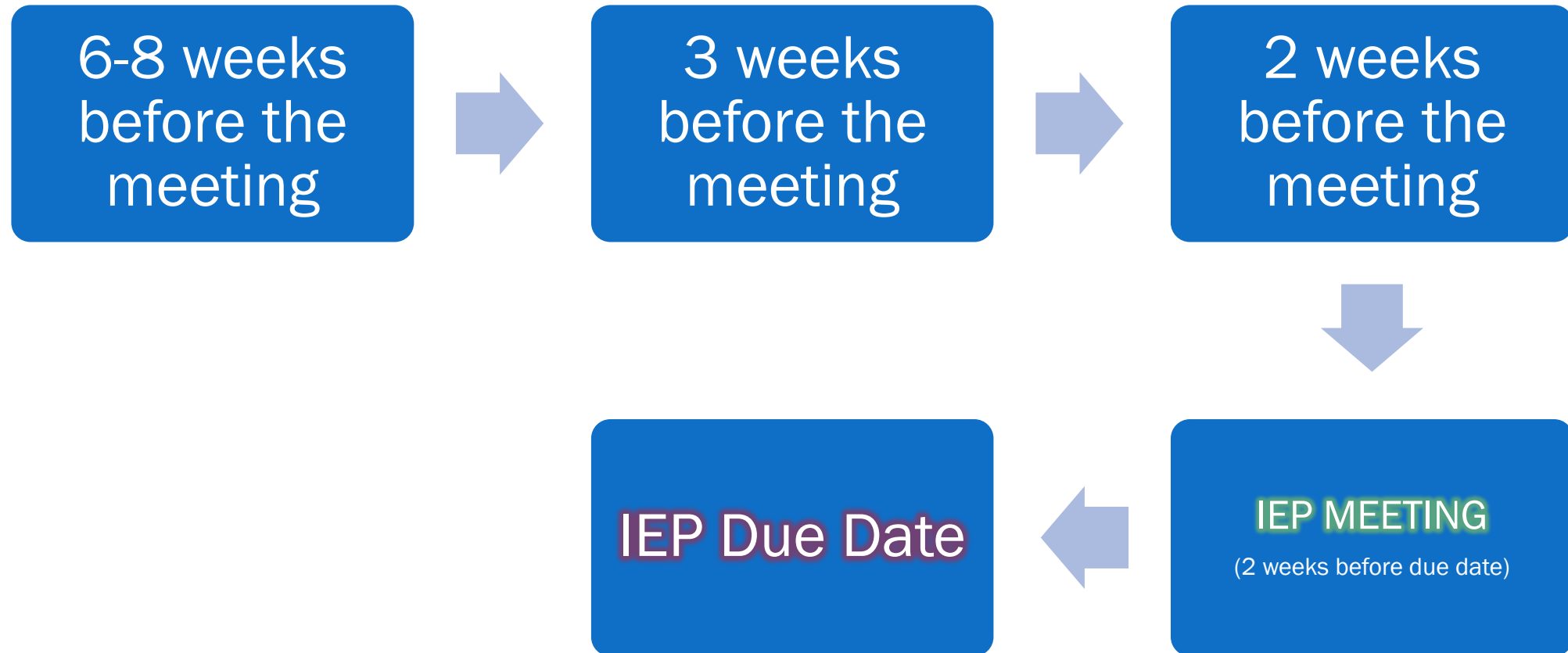
What if the Gen Ed teacher or Designee says they can only stay for part of the meeting?

- Schedule IEP meetings carefully & thoughtfully
- Help them (and their administrators) know & understand their role on the IEP team
- Emphasize their importance during the entire meeting (e.g., such as the LRE discussion)
- Follow written excusal procedures if necessary
- **The designee should stay for the entire meeting; they should not be excused!**

Plan Ahead!

- Review your caseload and school calendars
- Map out your IEPs and due dates
- **Schedule meetings 2 weeks before the due date**
- Share the plan and deadlines with team members
- Start planning for the next year in May

IEP Development Timeline



6 to 8 weeks before the meeting

- Case manager schedules the IEP meeting with parent 2 weeks before meeting is due
- IEP team begins informal preparation activities
- Get parent, teacher, and student input
- Review goals
- Review progress monitoring data
- Review Accommodation Tracker data
- Begin collecting work samples

3 weeks before the meeting

- Send written IEP invitations to parent, staff, and student (if appropriate)
- Begin the IEP draft
- Coordinate with team members to get their information into the draft
- *Planning is ok; Predetermination is not!*

2 weeks before the meeting

- **Complete the IEP draft**
- Notify team members the draft is complete
- Review the pdf/printed version of the IEP for clarity
- Send a copy of the draft to parents & ask them to review
- Make positive contact before the meeting

The day of the meeting

- Use a computer and projector; otherwise make copies for everyone
- Make sure everyone knows where & when
- Consider seating arrangements
- **Come prepared**

When the meeting starts

- Have the room ready ahead of time
- Appoint a skilled person to serve as the meeting facilitator
- Everyone introduces themselves
- Offer a copy of Michigan's Procedural Safeguards Notice
- Establish meeting mechanics, agenda, and purpose (a plan for the year to help the student succeed, not a parent-teacher conference)
- Update demographic information if appropriate
- **Ask parents to participate from the start**

During the meeting

- Get all voices in the room early in the meeting (“What I know/hope...”)
- Start with the positive, use people-first language, avoid acronyms
- Minimize disruptions (people coming and going)
- One person talks at a time; eliminate private conversations
- Lead a discussion of each part of the IEP; members discuss rather than report
- The PLAAFP (strengths/needs) serves as the foundation for other decisions
- Make changes & additions as needed
- Review changes in each section before moving to the next
- Check for understanding
- **Practice makes progress**

After the meeting

- Finalize the IEP & offer of FAPE at the meeting
- Double-check compliance “hot spots” on the IEP
- Make a formal, specific, written offer of FAPE
- Review the pdf/printed version of the IEP for clarity
- **Publish the IEP if possible**
- Give parents a copy to take home
- Give other IEP team members a copy & notify appropriate staff of changes/updates
- Ask, “how are you feeling about the IEP” or “how are you feeling about the meeting today?”

IEP “Hot Spots”

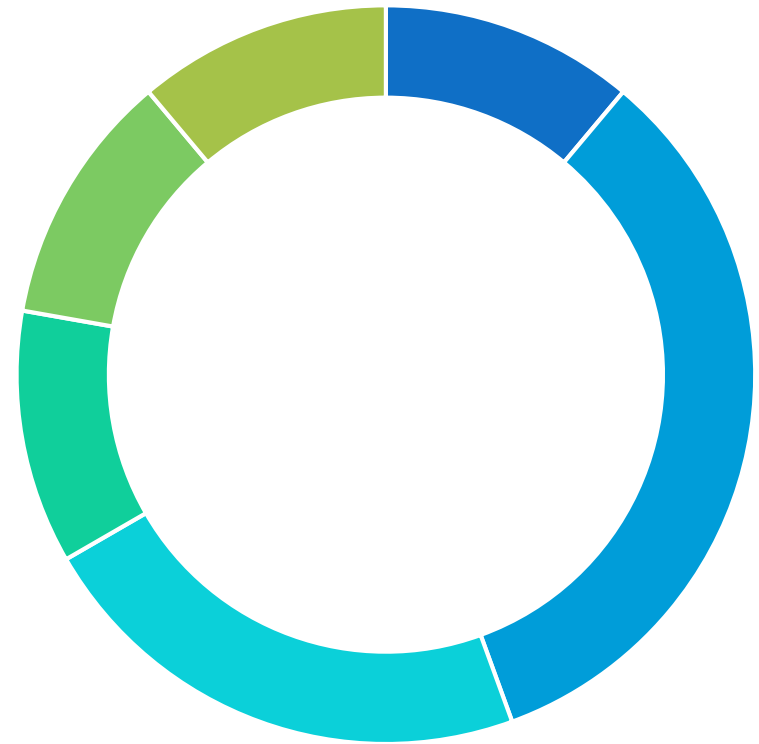
- **Meeting Participants** – Is everyone’s attendance marked accurately?
- **Parent input section** – Is there parent input?
- **PLAAFP (Strengths/Needs)** – Are the data objective, relevant, and interpretable to non-IEP team members? Are special considerations addressed appropriately?
- **Transition Plan (16+ years old)** – Will the plan support the student’s postsecondary vision? Does the plan meet B13 requirements?
- **Course of Study** – Is the course of student accurate & appropriate?
- **Measurable Annual Goals & Objectives** – Does each goal contain the 4 required components of a measurable goal? Are the short-term objectives measurable?

IEP “Hot Spots” (cont.)

- **Accommodations** – Are they specific, accurate, and appropriate? (*No “as needed” here!*)
- **Statewide assessments** – Are the assessments & accommodations specific, accurate & appropriate?
- **Services & Programs** – Are they written based on student need? Are they accurate and appropriate?
- **Other Considerations** – Does the IEP team need to include additional information here?
- **Notice** – Is the offer of FAPE specific, formal and clearly written? Does the Notice page capture the LRE discussion?

An Example 45-minute IEP

- 5 minutes – Welcome & Introductions
- 15 minutes – PLAAFP
- 10 minutes – Goals & Objectives
- 5 minutes – Accommodations & Modifications
- 5 minutes – Programs and Services; LRE
- 5 minutes – Closing Information including Notice



Tips for Happier, More Productive IEP Meetings

- See this article by Meghan Mathis: <http://www.teachhub.com/iep-meeting-tips>