

Ready or Not, It's IEP Season

Are you gathering data? Organizing information? Developing your agenda points or a list of questions? Or are you, like many parents, just chewing a few more antacids and hoping that you get a little sleep the night before the meeting?

Let's face it, when you meet with professionals about the child you love, emotions can get the best of you - whether it is a team of doctors, mental health professionals, or school staff. Some of the information can be hard to hear and designing a program that will best meet your child's needs can be complicated. But when you plan, prepare, and "put it in writing", you will be better able to focus on your child's needs and be a more effective team player during the meeting. So get your highlighter and pen or keyboard ready and take these steps:

Step One: Review your child's most recent evaluations – those done at school and any done by outside professionals. Look for data that explains your child's strengths, challenges and needs in each of these areas:

*academic achievement – reading, math, spelling, etc.

*functional performance – navigating the physical and social environment, daily life skills, etc.

*cognitive functioning – how your child takes in, understands, and expresses information, etc.

*communication skills – articulation, fluency, voice, conversational language, etc.

*health – current medical difficulties affecting your child in the school environment

*hearing/vision

*motor abilities – movement, coordination, strength, endurance, etc.

*social/emotional status – behavior, personal and social responsibility, etc.

Step Two: Review scores – grade cards, State assessment scores, etc. Do the report card grades match achievement indicated on State test scores? Have the scores improved over time or declined?

Step Three: Review any behavioral data. Has a functional behavioral assessment been completed recently? What behaviors are being targeted for improvement? Has a Behavior Intervention Plan been developed? How long has it been in place? Have behaviors improved with the additional assistance or positive interventions?

Step Four: Review past IEPs. It may help to make a chart listing the goals for each year to see how those have changed over time. Have the goals been very similar from year to year, or is it clear that some skills have now been mastered? Compare the accommodations list from year to year. Have accommodations been added? Eliminated? mastered? Compare the accommodations list from year to year. Have accommodations been added?

Eliminated?

Step Five: Compile a list of questions and concerns. It may help to group all your academic questions

together, your questions about social or behavior concerns together, etc. You may be able to contact your child's teacher or another school staff to get answers to some of the questions before the meeting date.

Step Six: Finalize your parent agenda and provide a copy to the school for their review a couple of days

before the meeting. It is common practice for schools to prepare some draft goals before the meeting. You can jot down some of your own to bring too or include your draft goals on the parent agenda you are sharing with the school.

Step Seven: Practice how you will approach areas of concern or requests for supports that are not

currently in place. Practice can decrease anxiety.

If this list makes you reach for more of those antacids, give Family Matters a call. We can assist you with

record reviews and educational planning. With planning and preparation you will know what you want and be able to stick to the facts without as much emotion. Remember the goal is to effectively participate in the

meeting by being a good listener, providing important information, and helping to craft solutions that are

mutually acceptable.

Family Matters Spring 2016 Newsletter

To read the full newsletter go to:

http://www.fmptc.org/sites/default/files/Spring%202016%20Newsletter%20Final_0.pdf