The IEP Facilitation Process

1. Before the meeting begins, the IEP facilitator will make sure that an agreement to facilitate is signed and in place.
2. If following the meeting, the team reaches an agreed upon plan, the IEP facilitator will assist the parties in reviewing and signing the plan.
3. If an agreement on the plan is not reached following the meeting, the parties may elect to schedule an additional meeting, with or without the facilitator.
4. Participants are asked to complete an evaluation of the facilitator and the IEP facilitation process at the end of the meeting.

How Long is a facilitated IEP meeting?

Generally, the length of the facilitated IEP meeting is unknown, as the team members determine when the plan is completed and ready to implement. Many IEP meetings run at least one hour, so it should be assumed that a contentious facilitated IEP meeting will take longer. In those instances where a day is not sufficient to reach an agreed upon plan, IEP facilitation can be scheduled for an additional day(s).

Important Information You Should Know About IEP Facilitation

- The IEP process can be an emotional, physically tiring and frustrating process. The external facilitator will serve the best interests of the team and the student. Parents and family supporters should make adequate preparations for the meeting.
- Some complex issues might need considerable time in order to result in a mutually agreeable outcome and a thorough and detailed IEP.
- IEP facilitation will not always result in an agreed upon plan.

Who Can I Contact for Additional Information?

- Your area State Support Team (SST)
- The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities at (800) 374-2806.
- The special education director or pupil services director of your local school district.
- A parent advocacy agency in your local area.
- Ohio Department of Education
  Mediation Coordinator
  Ohio Department of Education
  (614) 466-2650 or (877) 644-6338
  Fax: (614) 728-1097

www.education.ohio.gov

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IEP Facilitation Procedures for Special Education

A Guide for Parents and Districts

This pamphlet has been prepared for persons who may wish to participate in the IEP facilitation process to resolve disputes involving special education plans and related services to children with disabilities. It explains the process for requesting and participating in IEP facilitation.

Ohio | Department of Education

Office for Exceptional Children
Sue Zake, Ph.D., Director

What is IEP Facilitation?*

IEP facilitation is all about the student and helping the IEP team overcome the pressure and anxiety often associated with a contentious meeting. The facilitator makes sure that the focus of the team remains on the best interests of the student. The facilitator is a skilled special education mediator who has received specialized training in the area of IEP development. IEP facilitation is voluntarily inviting this external facilitator into the IEP team meeting. The facilitator's primary goal is to assist team members in the thoughtful, productive construction of a quality individualized educational program. This is achieved by encouraging and directing communication specific to the IEP and assuring that the members of the IEP team are empowered in their participation and invested in the plan. The facilitator makes no educational decisions regarding the student. Rather the facilitator will address issues during the process that produce tension within the team so that they are able to find their own solutions.

**This is a general description of the IEP Facilitation process. It is not intended to interpret, modify or replace formal requirements under federal law.*

The Benefits of IEP Facilitation

- Builds and improves relationships among the IEP team members and between parents and schools.
- Insures that the meeting is student-focused.
- Models effective communication and listening.
- Clarifies points of agreement and disagreement.
- Provides opportunities for team members to resolve conflicts if they arise.
- Encourages parents and professionals to identify new options to address unresolved problems.
- Costs less than more formal proceedings such as due process hearings.
- Is typically less stressful than formal proceedings.
- Supports follow through.
- Supports all parties in participating fully.
- IEP Facilitation is provided at no cost.

The Facilitator

A trained facilitator:

- Helps members of the IEP team focus on developing a satisfactory IEP. With the agreement of all team members, the facilitator may help create an overall agenda and assist in generating ground rules for the meeting.
- Guides the discussion by keeping the team's energy centered on student-focused questions.
- Assists the team to resolve conflicts and disagreements that may arise during the meeting.
- Helps to maintain open communication among all members.
- Helps team members develop and ask clarifying questions.
- 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 if a particular decision is right or wrong.
- Does not impose a decision on the group.

How to Request IEP Facilitation

IEP facilitation is available under the following conditions:

- IEP facilitation is available without the need to request a due process hearing or file a formal complaint.
- IEP facilitation can be requested by any member of the IEP team.
- IEP facilitation is available during the filing and investigation of a formal complaint or during the filing of a due process hearing request.
- IEP facilitation is provided at no cost to both parties.
- Once both parties agree to IEP facilitation, they are provided a list of three IEP facilitators to choose from.
- The selected IEP facilitator will contact both parties to set up the date, time and location of the IEP facilitation.

Submit requests for IEP Facilitation to:

Ohio Department of Education
Office for Exceptional Children, Mediation
25 South Front Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215-4183
Phone: (877) 644-6338
Fax (614) 728-1097

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