



Special Education and Your Child's IEP

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Advocating for educational services is often overwhelming and frustrating for MPS families. However knowledge is power as you navigate through special education programs and the IEP process. Effective collaboration begins with knowledge of the laws, regulations and rules governing special education. Read and learn the law. You can obtain a copy of your state's rules and regulations through the Department of Education. Familiarize yourself with the federal law governing the special education system which is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). IDEA outlines the requirements that must be met when of evaluating children with disabilities including the development of specialized programs and services to help them succeed in school.

An individualized education program or IEP is a collaborative, written statement for each child identified through a formal assessment process as meeting the eligibility criteria for special education services. Most often the assessment is completed by a representative of the school district however it is on occasion completed by a third party. a statement of the present levels of educational performance, a statement of annual goals, including short-term instructional objectives, a statement of the specific educational services to be provided, and the extent to which your child will be able to participate in a general educational classroom, the projected date for initiation and anticipated duration of such services, and appropriate objective criteria and evaluation procedures and schedules for determining, on at least an annual basis, whether instructional objectives are being achieved.

Children with a diagnosis of MPS and related diseases are typically classified as "Other Health Impaired" in the IEP document usually on the first page. This category includes a chronic or acute health problem resulting in limited strength, vitality or alertness. Special education and related services are needed for children in this category because the disease adversely affects his or her educational performance.

Below are some key points to assist you in preparation for and during your child's IEP meeting. Remember you (parents or legal guardians) are equal participants in the planning process with the school district in the development of the most appropriate and relevant IEP goals for your child.

Preparing for the IEP meeting

- BE INFORMED about special education law and IDEA

- Make sure your IEP team is educated on MPS and related diseases. Bring your MPS handouts with you and provide them to each member of your team. This may include Daily Living with MPS and Related Diseases, Management of MPS & ML, Education Strategies & Resources, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and Trigger Digits, Otitis Media, Orthopedic Problems in Children with MPS, Physical Therapy - For Professionals. Organize your material in a binder. Easy access to key material is vitally important in an IEP meeting.
- Try to meet with your child's teacher and any other individual who is providing related services for your child before the IEP meeting to draft new or existing goals.
- Get a copy of your school's agenda prior to the IEP meeting.
- Get a copy of a blank IEP form and draft your own goals and/or provide a statement emphasizing your child's personality and functioning level at home.
- Prior to the IEP meeting make a written request for copies of assessment reports and/or other educational records to review. Specify in the letter that all records be sent to you within a reasonable time prior to the IEP meeting.
- Provide your school administrator with any independent assessments, health data that may include evaluations, information from medical professionals and neuropsychologists who know your child and their specific medical condition.
- Consider providing an Emergency Health Plan prepared by yourself and your child's medical team that is made part of the IEP.
- Create a list of items you want to be sure to address during the meeting.
- Invite and prepare your own IEP participants. Provide the school administrator their names.
- Provide school the Notice of intent to tape-record IEP meeting (if applicable)

IEP Meeting

- Know your rights
- If possible, have both parents attend the meeting and present a united front. If this is not possible invite a friend or other advocate. The IEP meeting can be intimidating or anxiety provoking for some. You are entitled to bring or invite people to the IEP meeting. Having a supportive other with you can help later as you review or process the results, goals or discussion.
- If any team member that you were told would be present is not at the meeting you have the right to reschedule the meeting.
- Stay positive and collaborative. Although it may be hard, do not let your emotions interfere; be factual and prepared.
- Focus on your child's needs and rights not cost or administrative constraints.
- Remember to characterize your desired program as appropriate not best. Language is a powerful tool in the IEP meeting. Using the language of the special education law and IDEA conveys a powerful message to your team. If you feel that any component of the

IEP plan does not meet the stated needs of your child define it as “inappropriate.” This will signal that you don’t think the school district is meeting it’s legal obligations.

- Ask questions. Define and describe issues or problems in clear and specific terms. Offer solutions.
- Stay on task.
- Learn to be a negotiator. Prioritize important issues.
- There will be one administrator that takes notes during the meeting. You have the right to review their notes any time during or after the meeting. Remember to attend to the narrative page. All information that cannot be included by way of a check-box or is too long for the space provided will be located in this section. Information on any topic can be included on this page including disagreements between you and school personnel.
- You do not need to make a decision or sign the IEP at the end of the meeting. If you are unsure if this plan is right for your child or if you want to review with someone else you have time. Ask for a copy and let your team know when you expect to get back to them. There is a check box to indicate that you are in partial agreement if this feels more appropriate. If you are in complete agreement with the IEP you can sign at the end of the meeting. Remember to obtain copies of the IEP and congratulations.