IEP Checklist: *Prepare and Participate*

Your involvement...

in developing an effective and appropriate **I**ndividualized **E**ducation **P**rogram *or* **IEP** for your child is essential to your child's success.

While IEPs typically cover a 12-month period, they help to create the foundation for your child's future. Think of the adult your child will become. When planning, think well beyond just one year.

Get ready early, actively participate and stay connected throughout the year!

STEP ONE: Before The IEP Meeting:

Review! The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) requires schools to give parents of students with disabilities adequate notice to participate in the IEP meeting. This notice is called ***Invitation to Conference/Prior Notice.*** The NC Department of Public Instruction considers "adequate" notice to be 7-10 calendar days. The notice must be given to you in writing and in your native language.

Carefully review the invitation/notice and consider the following:

- ❒ Is the *purpose* of the meeting clearly stated?
- ❒ Is my child 14 years old or turning 14 during the next 12 months? If so, did he/she receive their own written invitation to the IEP meeting as required when planning for their transition to adulthood?
- ❒ Who is attending? What are their roles in the meeting?
- ❒ Are there any team member excusal requests attached to invitation?
- ❒ Is the Date/Time/Location convenient for your schedule?

Respond! Read, sign and return the Invitation to Conference/Prior Notice as soon as possible and keep a copy for your records. Include in writing any of the following that apply:

- ❒ Suggestions for alternative meeting dates or times, if necessary
- ❒ A request to participate by conference call or other way if you are unable to participate in person
- ❒ A list of whom you are inviting, if anyone
  - consider inviting a friend, relative, outside professional or note taker
- ❒ A list of concerns or issues that you wish to discuss: this is your ***agenda***
- ❒ A request for a copy of any proposed IEP draft, well in advance of the meeting
- ❒ Your approval or disapproval of any team member excusal request
- ❒ A note, if you plan to audio record the meeting

Be sure enough time has been scheduled for the meeting to discuss:

- **Items listed on the Invitation to Conference**
- **Concerns or issues on your agenda**

Organize!

Carefully organize your child's records/files in an order that works well for you. If you notice that you are missing an important document, ask your child's school for a copy.

Your child's records/files should include *(as appropriate for your child)*:

- ❒ Current and past IEPs
- ❒ Report cards
- ❒ Work samples
- ❒ Evaluation/assessment results
- ❒ Progress reports on academics and IEP goals
- ❒ Notes/email/phone call logs of communication about your child
- ❒ Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA)
- ❒ Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP)
- ❒ Other documents, such as Person-Centered Plan, tutor reports, behavior logs/reports, discipline referrals, medical records, therapy/treatment reports, etc.

Prepare!

As you prepare for the IEP meeting, review your child's records/files and consider the following:

1. ***What has been accomplished?***
2. ***What has worked well?***
3. ***What needs more work?***
4. ***What are my concerns? What are my child's concerns?***

- ❒ Visit ECAC's web site, **www.ecac-parentcenter.org**, to download or review the following tools:
  - Positive Student Profile
  - Blank IEP documents and other worksheets or forms
  - NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities
  - NC Procedural Safeguards: Handbook on Parents' Rights
  - Select the **YouTube** icon and watch ECAC's IEP videos
- ❒ Write down and prioritize a list of any questions, concerns or requests that you have.
- ❒ Create a vision statement for your child's life both now and for the future.
- ❒ Make copies or ask the school to make copies of your agenda (*those topics or issues that you want to discuss and address)*.
- ❒ Gather supporting documents such as private evaluations, therapist notes, research-based fact sheets, records of past trials, etc.
- ❒ Ask your child about how things are going. What is working or not working?
- ❒ Prepare your child to participate in the meeting, if they are attending.
- ❒ Consider bringing pictures or a short video of your child to the meeting.
- ❒ Give or send a reminder note to anyone you have invited to the meeting.
- ❒ Ask the teacher(s) about your child's progress and any specific concerns or ideas they have for the upcoming year.

STEP TWO: The IEP Meeting:

Participate! It is important for every member of the IEP Team, including you, to be prepared to work together. The Team must consider and use a wide variety of data and other information, including the information you share, to create an IEP that is appropriate for your child.

The following steps will help you to effectively participate in the IEP meeting:

- ❒ Remember to bring your notes, records and any other information you need for the meeting. Don't forget a pencil/pen/paper and remember to bring your child's pictures or video if desired.
- ❒ Arrive 10-15 minutes before the meeting's start time.
- ❒ Connect with any person(s) that you invited before entering meeting.
- ❒ Request introductions, if necessary, and clarify everyone's role at the meeting.
- ❒ Ask who is responsible for taking the meeting notes or minutes. *Review notes periodically during the meeting to ensure that they are clear, accurate and have adequate detail.*
- ❒ Review the IEP meeting agenda.
- ❒ Give copies of your agenda *(if you made one)* to each team member.
- ❒ Share your ideas, opinions and feelings throughout the meeting.
- ❒ Listen carefully to what is being said.
- ❒ If something is not clear, ask questions as needed to be sure you fully understand before moving forward.
- ❒ Request a brief break if you need one.

Remember that YOU are the expert on your child!

Fifteen minutes before the meeting ends:

- ❒ Review the meeting minutes and the Prior Written Notice for accuracy. (form DEC 5)
- ❒ Check to see if all your concerns have been addressed.
- ❒ Make sure that the wording throughout the IEP is clear and specific enough to be understood by anyone – even if they were not present at the meeting!!
- ❒ Schedule another IEP meeting if there is an unresolved issue or if you ran out of time.
- ❒ Identify who is responsible for each part of the IEP and any follow-up activity.
- ❒ Sign the IEP. Your signature documents your ***attendance and participation*** in developing the IEP.
- ❒ If you disagree with any part of the IEP, state your concern(s) in writing on the IEP form next to your signature or in the margin.
- ❒ Thank the other team members for their participation, efforts and ideas for your child.

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are entitled to a copy of your child's completed IEP. If it is not offered to you, ask for a copy before leaving. Be sure to take it with you even if a cleaned-up copy will be sent.

You may also receive copies of other special education related documents at the end of the meeting. Once home and while the meeting is still fresh in your memory, take time to review everything. Contact the school in writing if any clarifications or corrections are needed. As always, keep these documents with your child's other records!

STEP THREE: After The IEP Meeting:

Follow Up!

Congratulations, you have completed an important step in your child's education. This is a great time to reflect on your IEP meeting experience and to make some notes about how to improve this process for the next meeting.

- ❒ Write ***"Thank You"*** notes or letters to those you invited and other team members.
- ❒ Write letters of clarification to address any concerns, questions, overlooked areas, etc., if needed.
- ❒ Consider sharing a copy of the IEP with other professionals working with your child.
- ❒ Ensure ALL of your child's teachers are aware that the IEP has been updated.

Remember...

the end of the IEP meeting is the beginning of an appropriate education for your child. Stay connected throughout the year:

- ❒ ***MONITOR*** your child's education to ensure proper implementation of the IEP and to ensure that your child is making adequate progress.
- ❒ ***COMMUNICATE*** with your child's teachers and others. Share successes and address any issues as they arise.
- ❒ ***MAKE TIME*** to review the IEP periodically and request an IEP meeting to discuss changes if needed.
- ❒ ***CONTACT ecac at 1-800-962-6817*** or visit **www.ecac-parentcenter.org**

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ecac is home to North Carolina's Statewide Parent Training and Information Center (PTI)

All services are provided at no cost to parents, students and families.

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