

The Facilitated IEP Meeting

What is a “Facilitated IEP Meeting”?

Facilitation is a process in which a trained and impartial person who is not a member of the committee assists the IEP team to communicate effectively and work toward agreements with which the members can all feel comfortable. The facilitator is not a decision maker or an advisor, and he or she does not endorse or sign the IEP.

What Are the Benefits of Facilitation?

Facilitation takes place during regularly scheduled IEP meetings and helps ensure a safe and respectful environment in which all members can feel welcome to share their perspectives. Among the many benefits that can be expected are:

- a positive climate for discussion
- more focused and efficient use of time
- greater clarity and mutual understanding
- improved team spirit and working relationships
- increased “ownership” and support of the agreements made
- reduced risk of bad feelings, tensions, and conflict
- an increased probability of reaching an agreed-upon IEP
- better serving the student for whom the team is meeting

When Is Facilitation Recommended?

Facilitation can be used whenever an IEP team wants to improve team spirit and effectiveness. When conflicts have developed, facilitation can help defuse tensions, improve communications, and restore trust and more positive working relationships. It can also be used when no conflict exists at all, to ensure better use of time, more effective communication, and more productive meetings.

What Happens Once Facilitation Is Requested?

Once facilitation is requested, an assigned facilitator will contact the chairperson and the parents by telephone to confirm the agreement to facilitation, verify the meeting time and place, and answer any questions they may have. An agreement form for facilitation is signed by all participants at the start of the IEP meeting.

Are There Any Costs or Downsides to Facilitation?

The costs of facilitation, if any, are paid by the school district. There are no known downsides because no options are lost by agreeing to facilitation; the participants have nothing to lose and a great deal to gain.

Who Are the Facilitators?

In most cases, the facilitators are school district professionals who are already very familiar with the IEP process. In addition, they have received specialized training in how to be impartial and how to support productive dialogue among IEP team members. Although they may be employed by a school district, their role at the meeting is to support the process of the team, not to give advice or make decisions. They are committed to a neutral role, and any participants are welcome to speak up if at any time they perceive the facilitator as stepping out of an impartial role.

Whom Can I Call for More Information?

For more information or to schedule facilitation, contact:

To be completed by the local agency who will be coordinating or providing facilitation services.