

# For Parents: Ten Mistakes to Avoid Before The IEP Meeting

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*The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. R. Nichols*



**Assume the IEP meeting has to take place in a board or conference room.**

Think outside of the conference room! The meeting can take place at your home, in your child's classroom, or in another location. Choose a place that you and your child will feel comfortable.



**Not talk to individual key players prior to the IEP meeting.**

Take the time to meet individually with each teacher and related service provider your child works with. Get a current update on how your child is doing, a list of his strengths, what goals he has already accomplished, what accommodations have worked, and future goals that would be appropriate for your child.



**Forget to ask to receive a draft IEP at least one week prior to the meeting.**

The school staff will be familiar with the draft IEP that will be used at the IEP meeting. You also need to know what the school is considering to put in place. Review the draft IEP, ask a friend, partner, or advocate to review it also. Make notes of agreement and areas where you disagree.



**Not write your own draft IEP.**

Remember, parents are equal members of the IEP team. Take the time to write a draft IEP from your family's perspective. Just as you want to receive a copy of the school's draft IEP, it's courteous to share your draft IEP with the school a week before the meeting.



**Disregard the importance of involving your child.**

Regardless of your child's age, plan on your child participating in planning her education. Younger children could select photographs of themselves to show at the meeting, or share what they like and dislike at school. Older children can prepare a book about themselves. Student involvement can increase with age and a child can share by talking, with a PowerPoint, or a Prezi.



**Believe a well-written IEP can be written in one hour.**

This can rarely be done in 60 minutes, even when everyone is "on the same page." Be proactive and ask for a two-hour block of time for the meeting. If there are areas of disagreement during the meeting, be prepared to schedule one or more additional meetings.



**Not organize all the paperwork you have collected.**

Make a promise to yourself that this will be the year you organize all the records, notes, and previous IEPs. Place them in chronological order and further divide the documents by category. Take this notebook to each meeting. You can quickly look up any information you need.



**Believe it will be fine to attend the meeting alone.**

IEP meetings can be very emotional – you are talking about your child's life! In addition, it can be difficult to take notes and talk at the same time. Invite a spouse, partner, childcare provider, or neighbor as your support.



**Not anticipate questions or concerns.**

The educators on the IEP team may raise specific concerns about your ideas or your suggestions. Be proactive and brainstorm possible responses you can use at the meeting.



**Arrive on time.**

Plan on being outside the door of the meeting at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start time. This will give you, your child, and your support person the opportunity to decide where you want to sit, organize your materials, take a deep breath, and put a smile on your face!

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