



FACT SHEET

HOW TO NAVIGATE AN IEP MEETING

August 2026

An IEP, or Individualized Education Program, is a plan written by a team of people, including the parent or other educational decision maker (EDM). This plan describes the unique needs of a child who is eligible for special education and explains the specific services and supports that the school will provide based on the child's individual needs.¹ Parents who want to effectively advocate for their child to receive a quality education that meets their needs should be prepared for IEP meetings and know what to expect.

This fact sheet discusses specific steps you can take as parent, guardian, caregiver, or other EDM to prepare for IEP meetings, ask questions at meetings, and successfully advocate for your child.

See the attached companion document, Practical Tips: IEP Meeting Checklist, on p. 13.

WHAT IS AN IEP?

An Individualized Education Program, or IEP, is a written plan that describes the unique needs of a child who is eligible for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).² The IEP lists the services and other supports the child needs to make real progress in school. Although the IEP is often long and can look overwhelming, it must include specific information. Don't be afraid to ask questions about where this information can be found in your child's IEP.

An IEP should include the "who," "what," "when," "where," and "how" of your child's special education services. The IEP should explain *when* the services will begin, as well as *how frequently* and for *how long* they will be provided (for example, two half-hour sessions of physical therapy every week). The IEP must also state *where* the services will be provided (for example, in a regular or special education classroom or a special school) and tell you *what* special training and equipment will be given to the teachers and aides who work with the child. The IEP also tells you how much of the school day the child will spend with classmates who do not have disabilities.

The IEP is the "contract" between you and the school for the services your child needs to make progress. If the school does not follow the IEP, they have broken that contract, and you can file a Division of Compliance Complaint with the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education (BSE Complaint) or undertake other options. See ELC-PA's fact sheet on [Resolving Special Education Disagreements](#) for more information about steps you can take when a school is not following an IEP, including a [Bureau of Special Education Complaint Form template](#).

WHO WRITES THE IEP?

The IEP is written by the IEP Team. Federal law requires that this team include five groups of people:¹⁷

- (1) The child's parents.
- (2) At least one regular education teacher of the child (if the child is or will be participating in the regular education environment).
- (3) At least one special education teacher or, where appropriate, one special education provider, such as the child's speech therapist.
- (4) Someone who can interpret the child's evaluations (but if someone already on the IEP Team can interpret the evaluations, such as the special education director, this does not need to be an additional or separate person).
- (5) A school official who is qualified to provide or supervise specially designed instruction, who knows about the school's resources, and is familiar with the general education curriculum.

RACIAL BIAS & DISCRIMINATION IN THE IEP PROCESS

The involvement of parents or other education decision makers (EDMs) is core to how the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) works.³ Parents are experts on their children, with a strong interest in their wellbeing and education. The IEP process benefits from this expertise, and, in fact, schools are required to involve parents in developing their child's IEPs.⁴

Under the law, schools cannot discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin.⁵ Yet, due to systemic bias, institutional racism, and individual biases of school personnel, not all parents get an equal opportunity to be heard and meaningfully participate in their child's IEP process. For example, parents of multilingual learners and culturally diverse students often are not given equal opportunities to substantively participate in developing the IEP. Schools are required to provide interpreters and translated documents at their own expense,⁶ but they often fail to do so in a timely way.⁷ Schools also may be unwilling to collaborate with multi-lingual families due to national origin-centric bias or intolerance of families' cultural differences.⁸ As a result, the voices of multilingual learners' families may not be meaningfully heard.

Black families' participation in the process is often shaped by anti-Black racism⁹ and structural inequality in education at the individual and systemic level.¹⁰ They must navigate not only the substance of the IEP, but also concerns that schools will stigmatize or retaliate against their child if the parent disagrees with the school.¹¹ Despite requirements that information be made available in language that the public can understand,¹² parents are not always provided with accessible resources.¹³ Due to biases, Black parents also report that schools are often unwilling to consider ambitious postsecondary plans for Black students.¹⁴ Even when implementing IEPs, schools often fail to follow the agreed-upon plan for Black students, who also are more likely to be excluded from the classroom or more harshly disciplined than their white peers for the same or similar conduct.¹⁵

Rather than being able to work with the school to address disability-related behavior through appropriate supportive intervention, these families often face discrimination based on their race and disability.¹⁶ It is vitally important that school districts ensure that racial bias is addressed and that Black parents are informed of their rights and given the tools that all parents need in order to advocate.

Depending on what type of IEP your child receives, federal or Pennsylvania state law may require other people to be on the IEP Team. For example, if your child is also gifted, a gifted education teacher must be on the IEP Team.¹⁸ Your child can also join the IEP Team if you think that it's

appropriate. If your child will turn 16 during the next school year, they must be invited to the meeting.¹⁹ This is important so that your child is involved in planning their future after high school.

You can invite more people than the IEP Team to the IEP meeting. Either parents or the school can invite people to an IEP meeting that they believe have knowledge or expertise about your child. This means you can, for example, invite your advocate, your lawyer, your child's physical therapist, a member of your child's Early Intervention Program, a trusted family member, or a person to whom your child is close, such as a mentor.

WHAT IF I, AS THE PARENT, HAVE A DISABILITY OR LANGUAGE BARRIER THAT LIMITS MY ABILITY TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN THE IEP MEETING?

Schools have a legal obligation to provide reasonable accommodations, modifications, or services to both students and parents to participate in IEP meetings, and they cannot discriminate against a parent on the IEP Team based on their disability or national origin.²⁰ This protection applies to parents, guardians, caregivers, court-appointed education decision makers, and surrogate parents assigned by a school district. A school must provide accommodations and language-access support to enable you to fully participate in the child's education and special education decision-making. You can learn more about this right and complete a form to request accommodations at [Request for Disability-Related Accommodations for Parents/Caregivers](#) or for language accommodations at [Request for Translation and Interpretation Services](#). (This tool is available for general education in [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#), [Arabic](#) and [Nepali](#); it is available for special education in [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#), [Arabic](#) and [Nepali](#).)

WHEN DO I NEED TO HAVE AN IEP MEETING?

If your child already has an IEP, you should have an IEP meeting **at least once a year** to review and revise it.²¹ But you have the right to ask for more frequent IEP Team meetings.²² So, if your child is having issues at school related to their IEP, you have the right to ask for an IEP Team meeting. ELC-PA has created a [draft letter asking for a new IEP Meeting](#) to help you advocate.

If this is your child's first IEP, then the first IEP meeting must be held within 30 calendar days of the date on your child's Evaluation Report.²³ An Evaluation Report, often called an ER, is the comprehensive written document that summarizes tests, assessments, and your child's educational needs. It determines your child's eligibility for an IEP, and it provides important baseline information that is needed to develop an effective IEP. The school is required to give you 10 calendar days to review this important report before the first IEP meeting,²⁴ but you have the power to waive the waiting period in writing if you want to schedule the IEP meeting sooner.

WHAT SHOULD THE IEP INCLUDE?

Although IEPs from different schools or school districts may look different, they are required by law to contain the same pieces of information. Generally, there are **eight sections of information** that IEP Teams must discuss and include in the IEP. Here we break down these eight sections and describe what should be considered and included in each section of the IEP.

1. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS SECTION:

For this section, the IEP Team must record whether your child is blind or visually impaired, deaf or hearing impaired, if your child has needs in the areas of communication, if your child needs assistive technology devices and/or services, if your child has limited English skills, or if your child has behaviors that get in the way of their learning or the learning of others.²⁵

TIP: If the IEP Team determines that your child's behaviors are getting in the way of their learning or their peers' learning, the IEP team must address strategies to help them. You can request that the school complete a **Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)**, which is used to identify problem behaviors and develop interventions to improve or eliminate those behaviors. Once an FBA is conducted, the information is used to develop a Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP) which outlines strategies and supports to help your child adopt new, more appropriate behaviors. A PBSP may include changes to the learning environment and will include Positive Behavior Supports, which focus on teaching your child to adopt positive behaviors rather than punishing them for existing behaviors.

- **Questions to ask:** What triggers the child's behaviors at school? What skills should be taught so the child can behave more appropriately? If problems do occur, how will they be handled? Does the child need behavioral support right away while the FBA is being conducted?

2. PRESENT LEVELS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT SECTION:

This section

contains information about the child's present levels of academic skills, such as their reading level, and functional performance, which includes their social skills and living skills.²⁶

TIP: It is important for this section to be completed because establishing your child's current levels helps the team decide what goals are appropriate for your child. The "education levels" in this section need not be only academic.

- Information from any FBA should also be part of this section, including how your child's disability affects their involvement and progress in the general education curriculum.²⁷
- If your child will be 14 or older when the IEP is implemented, this section must

include your child's present levels related to postsecondary transition goals (such as results of vocational evaluations, career surveys, etc.).

3. TRANSITION SERVICES SECTION: Here, the IEP Team lists your child's post-high school goals and what services the child needs to achieve those goals to prepare them for life after graduation.

- This section must be filled out for all children who are 14 years or older during the school year that the IEP will apply.²⁸
- This section should consider results from vocational and educational evaluations, interest inventories, and other surveys.

- **Questions to ask:** What does the child want to do after high school? What are the child's strengths and interests? What academic and other skills will the child need for adult living, including employment or accessing higher education? Are the needed skills being taught?

What does the IEP Team think should be the child's measurable post-secondary goals related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills? Are these goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments and the child's own preferences? (If not, why not?) What transition services (including courses of study) are needed to help the child achieve the transition goals?²⁹

4. PARTICIPATION IN ASSESSMENTS SECTION: The IEP needs to address whether your child can participate in statewide testing (the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment or PSSA for elementary students and the Keystone Exams for high school students) and district-wide (local) achievement testing.³⁰

- If the team decides that your child can participate, then they should list what accommodations the child should receive for these assessments.³¹
- If the team decides that taking these assessments would not be appropriate given your child's disabilities, then the child must take the alternative assessment (Pennsylvania Alternative System of Assessment or PASA) instead. The team must give written justification in the IEP for why your child is taking the PASA instead of the PSSA.³²

5. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES SECTION: The IEP must list your child's academic and functional goals for the school year. These goals must be "**measurable**" and must be designed to meet the child's individual needs.³³

- The child's goals should be designed so that their needs can be met to allow them to make progress and be involved in the **general education curriculum**,³⁴ which is the curriculum that your school follows for all children at your child's grade level.
- The IEP goals must be **measurable** through testing, and progress should be tracked.³⁵ To be measurable, a goal should describe a specific behavior or skill, the level of performance of the behavior/skill the student must show, and the condition under which the behavior/skill must be performed. For example, "Jane will not act out in class" is not a measurable goal. A measurable goal would be: "during group discussions in her academic classes, Jane will participate appropriately (raise hand, ask and answer questions, contribute relevant ideas) with no more than two reminder cards. She will participate in this manner for 80% of the time for two consecutive weeks by the end of the semester."
- **Your child's IEP goals should also change from year to year.**³⁶ Your child has a right to an education that allows them to make progress and grow.³⁷ The IEP Team should ensure the goals they set for your child are "ambitious" and changing as your child changes over time.³⁸

- The IEP must also explain when progress reports will be issued.³⁹ A common timeline for progress reports is every six weeks, but they may be more frequent, depending on the needs of your child. For example, if your child has behavioral issues, you may consider requesting progress reports each week.

6. SPECIAL EDUCATION, RELATED SERVICES, SUPPLEMENTAL SERVICES AND

ACCOMMODATIONS SECTION: This section of your child’s IEP outlines exactly what the school will do to help your child meet their goals. It describes what school policies need to be modified and what support your child is entitled to receive. This section can be broken down into three parts: (1) program modifications and specially designed instruction, (2) related services, and (3) additional considerations.

Program Modifications and Specially Designed Instruction

The IEP Team should consider and describe what specialized instruction, methods, and strategies the school should use to help your child reach their IEP goals, be involved in the classroom and nonacademic activities, and make progress in the general education curriculum.⁴⁰ This

TIP: Questions to ask about supplementary aids and services include: Are changes to the regular education program needed to help my child succeed in regular education classes? For example, does my child need more time to take tests? Are extra supports needed for my child in the regular education classroom? For example, does my child need a one-on-one aide or assistive technology?

section should include what the *school and school staff* will do to support your child, not only what your child will do. An example of specially designed instruction (SDI) is requiring the school counselor to give the student one-on-one instruction on self-advocacy skills.

The IEP should also include descriptions of the “supplementary aids and services” the child will receive.⁴¹ These are services and supports provided in general education classes, other education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings to enable your child to be educated and participate with nondisabled peers.⁴²

Related Services

Related services are support services that help your child benefit from their specialized education or more fully help them participate in their education.⁴³ This may include, for example, transportation, speech, occupational or physical therapy, interpreting services, counseling, or school health services.⁴⁴ The IEP should describe how long sessions for these services will be and how often they must occur.⁴⁵ For example, if your child needs speech therapy, the IEP should say that they need speech therapy “twice a week for 30 minutes.”

Support for Staff

The IEP should also contain what supports the school will provide to the staff who are educating or supporting your child (“supports for school personnel”).⁴⁶ The staff may need specialized training or technology, for example, to best support your child in achieving their goals. If your child is gifted, the IEP must also list any support services that are needed to ensure they can benefit from gifted education.⁴⁷

Extended School Year

The IEP must also determine whether your child needs [an extended school year](#) (ESY). These are services that provide additional instruction time in the summer to ensure your child is able to continue to make progress.⁴⁸ ESY must be considered for every child with a disability based on seven different factors, such as the severity of their disability and whether they may start to lose skills over the long summer break. ESY services are also offered if a student needs extra time in the summer to learn skills in order to receive a free, appropriate public education. Your child’s IEP Team will make an ESY determination on an individual basis considering all the factors.

7. EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT SECTION:⁴⁹ There are four pieces of information that must be considered and described in the educational placement section of the IEP:

- First, the IEP must tell you *where* the child will receive services, including how much of the school day the child will be included in general education classes and activities.⁵⁰ The IEP Team must begin by deciding whether the child can make progress in a general education class with **supplementary aids and services**.⁵¹
- Next, the Team must then decide what **amount and type of special education support** the child needs. The “amount” of special education support tells you the total amount of time in a typical school day that the child receives special education supports from special education staff:⁵²
 - a. “Itinerant support” (special education supports provided for 20% or less each day);⁵³
 - b. “Supplemental support” (special education supports provided for more than 20% of the day but less than 80% of the day);⁵⁴ or
 - c. “Full-time” support (supports provided for 80% or more of the day).⁵⁵
- In addition, the IEP Team will make decisions about the **type** of special education support the child needs. This means identifying your child’s most important learning needs and what sort of support they need to make progress on those learning needs.⁵⁶ For example, to learn academic skills (learning support), to learn appropriate behaviors (emotional support), to acquire basic living skills (life skills), etc.
- Finally, the IEP needs to include the **location** where educational services will be given. This is the school that your child will attend each day.⁵⁷ The law favors educating the student in their home school district with their general education peers to the maximum extent appropriate. If the child will not be in their home school, the IEP must state why

the child's needs cannot be met in that school.⁵⁸

- 8. DATA REPORTING SECTION:**⁵⁹ This section contains information that the state uses to track whether school districts are placing children with disabilities in programs with children who do not have disabilities, as opposed to separate special education programs.

PRACTICAL TIPS: WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE MY CHILD'S IEP MEETING?

- ✓ **REVIEW PDE's ANNOTATED IEP:** The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has created an ["annotated" IEP](#), which explains the various sections of an IEP and what should be included in each. Reviewing this document may help you get an idea of what an IEP looks like, if you haven't seen one, and an idea of what information you should be considering as the IEP Team discusses specialized education and related services. You can also use the annotated IEP as a guide during your IEP meeting.
- ✓ **GATHER INFORMATION:** If this is your first IEP meeting, this first step may mean gathering medical records and notes so the IEP Team has more information to understand your child's disability. You will also want to **request a copy of the school's Evaluation Report in advance and request your child's draft IEP in advance**. If your child already has an IEP, you may wish to request and review documentation on your child's progress and services, prior IEPs and evaluation reports, and prior notes from meetings.
 - You have a right to request records from the school.⁶⁰ You can request a copy of your child's updated progress report, which can help you determine how your child has progressed toward those goals.
 - Take notes on what goals have been achieved, which have been mastered, and which need more work. Do you and your child feel like they've made progress toward a particular goal?
 - You may also want to look at other indicators of your child's performance that the school or your child may have. This may include samples of your child's work, goal trackers, etc.
 - It may also be helpful to look at your child's last IEP so that you can understand what services your child is currently entitled to receive.
 - **Questions to consider:** Are the current services working for your child? Is there some service in the IEP that they are not receiving? You should also look at the most recent evaluation of your child, performed either by the school or by an outside provider.
- ✓ **REVIEW THE DRAFT IEP:** The school may have already prepared a draft of the IEP or placement recommendations, goals, and accommodations. You can ask for these documents and review them before the meeting. Notably, **accepting a draft IEP from the school does not mean that this is what the final IEP should or will look like**. The IEP should reflect the conversations and decisions made in the IEP meeting among the entire team, including you.

- If you are not sure where to start at the IEP meeting, you may want to ask the school to go through the IEP goals and explain how they plan to reach each goal by next year.
- ✓ **PREPARE YOUR PARENT INPUT STATEMENT:** The IDEA recognizes that parents and guardians are experts on their own children and that they have a vested interest in the education and opportunity their children are provided.⁶¹ As a result, the IEP meeting must include a **discussion of your concerns, goals, and issues with your child's current IEP.**⁶² Your thoughts must be included as part of the IEP meeting, and it might be helpful for you to organize them before the meeting in a Parent Input Statement or Vision Statement and provide it to your school via email before the IEP meeting.
 - **Questions to consider:**⁶³ What is working, based on your child's current education services and placement? Do you have any behavioral or skills concerns regarding your child? What is working at home? What is your child saying about school? What are your child's strengths and interests, both in school and outside of it? What are you noticing about your child's progress?
- Your Parent Input/Vision Statement should end with your suggestions for what needs to change: What supports and services do you think your child needs? What supports, accommodations, or behavioral interventions would help your child in the classroom?

TIP: There is no required form that this document should take, so you can write a letter, a paragraph, or a list, whatever you find most useful.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING TO THE IEP MEETING?

It is helpful to have any document about your child's progress, education, and needs with you when you come to the IEP meeting. The [Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates has created a thorough list](#) on their website of what documents parents should consider bringing to an IEP meeting. Some particularly useful documents to have with you are copies of your child's last two IEPs, your child's current IEP, any medical documents and recent medical updates, and any notes you prepared before the meeting.⁶⁴ If you prepared a Vision/Parent Input Statement, you should have that easily available for you to read or reference during the IEP meeting.

It's helpful to take notes during the meeting so you can remember and refer back to the conversations that you and the rest of the IEP Team had, what options were considered, and how issues were resolved.⁶⁵ As a result, you may want to bring something to take notes with during the IEP meeting.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE IEP MEETING?

Within a week of the IEP meeting, it is helpful to send an email documenting the changes that the IEP Team agreed to implement at the meeting. This would include changes to your child's classroom placement, additional services, changes in transportation, or changes in how often or the manner in which your child receives services.

After the IEP meeting, the school is required to give you a copy of the draft IEP and a form called a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement/Prior Written Notice (NOREP/PWR).⁶⁶ This document asks you to sign to indicate whether you approve of the IEP or not. It is important to review the draft IEP to ensure that it includes all the changes agreed to by the IEP Team.



Important Note: If this is your child's first IEP, special education services cannot begin until you officially sign and approve of the IEP on the NOREP/PWR form.⁶⁷ However, if this is not your child's first IEP, you only have 10 calendar days to write on the NOREP/PWR form that you agree or disagree with the IEP before the new IEP goes into effect.

WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE PROPOSED IEP?

If you do not agree with the proposed IEP, you should check the "I do not approve" box on the NOREP/PWN. You then have a number of options to address the conflict with the school. See ELC-PA's fact sheet on [Resolving Special Education Disagreements](#) for resources on what to do next. If you disagree with parts of the IEP, but agree with some of it, you can ask the school to start some of the new IEP services while you work out the disagreement with the remaining sections. Be specific about what you want the school to start providing and what you disagree with and want to change.

The Education Law Center-PA (ELC-PA) is a nonprofit, legal advocacy organization with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, dedicated to ensuring that all children in Pennsylvania have access to a quality public education. Through legal representation, impact litigation, community engagement, and policy advocacy, ELC-PA advances the rights of underserved children, including children living in poverty, children of color, children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, children with disabilities, multilingual learners, LGBTQ+ youth, children experiencing homelessness, and children at the intersection of multiple underserved identities.

ELC-PA's publications provide a general statement of the law. However, each situation is different. If questions remain about how the law applies to a particular situation, contact ELC-PA's Helpline for information and advice – visit www.elc-pa.org/contact or call 215-238-6970 (Eastern and Central PA) or 412-258-2120 (Western PA) – or contact another attorney of your choice.

¹ 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d).

² 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A).

³ Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 *et seq.*

⁴ 20 U.S.C. § 1400(c)(5)(B); 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(B)(i); 34 C.F.R. § 300.322.

⁵ Title VI prohibits intentional race discrimination in any program that receives federal funding. 42 U.S.C. § 2000d.

⁶ 20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(4); 20 U.S.C. § 1415(d)(2); 34 C.F.R. §§ 300.345(e).

⁷ Meghan M. Burke et al., *Improvements in Proxy Individualized Education Program Meeting Participation among Latino Parents*, 53 EDUC. & TRAINING IN AUTISM AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES 393 (2018) (summarizing the research on information access as a barrier to participation and finding that accessible training on IEP processes significantly increases culturally diverse families' participation in IEP meetings); Patricia A. Massey & Stephen A. Rosenbaum, *Disability*

Matters: Toward a Law School Clinical Model for Serving Youth with Special Education Needs, 11 CLINICAL L. REV. 271, 279-82 (2005).

⁸ Andrew Woo Jung, *Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) and Barriers for Parents from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*, DIVERSITY AND SPECIAL EDUC., Spring 2011, at 21, 22.

⁹ Morgan, H., *Misunderstood and mistreated: Students of color in special education*. Voices of Reform, 3(2), 71-81 (2020) (gathering research regarding misidentification of Black students and higher likelihood of being placed in inferior, more segregated learning environment), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED610548.pdf>; Torin D. Togut, *The Gestalt of the School-to-Prison Pipeline*, 20 AM. U. J. GENDER, SOC. POL'Y & L. 163, 164 (2011) (describing the role of bias and power differentials); Patricia A. Massey & Stephen A. Rosenbaum, *Disability Matters: Toward a Law School Clinical Model for Serving Youth with Special Education Needs*, 11 CLINICAL L. REV. 271, 281 (2005).

¹⁰ Dep't of Justice F.B.I., Reported Hate Crimes at Schools: 2018-2022 (2024) <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/reported-hate-crimes-schools/dl?inline=> (finding school hate crimes increased by 57% between 2018 and 2022, with anti-Black hate crimes by far the most common); S. Poverty L. Ctr., Hate at School (2019), https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/tt_2019_hate_at_school_report_final_0.pdf (describing "a surge of incidents involving racial slurs and symbols, bigotry and the harassment of minority children in the nation's schools."); U.S. Dept. of Educ., *2013-2014 Civil Rights Data Collection: A First Look*, 6, 9 (updated Sept. 29, 2016), <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look.pdf>.

¹¹ Massey & Rosenbaum, *supra* note 6, at 280; Erin P. Kilpatrick, Jolie Ziomek-Daigle & Allison U. Nealy, *Postsecondary Planning Perspectives of Black Parents of Young Adults with High-Incidence Disabilities*, 90 EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN 442, 451-52 (2024); Kelli A. Sanderson, Meghan M. Burke & Samantha E. Goldman, *Black Parents' Reflections on Individualized Education Program Meeting Experiences*, J. SPECIAL EDUC., June 2026, at 9 ("[P]articipants know the importance of advocacy but fear being framed as too aggressive. Indeed, this tension may be difficult for Black families to navigate – being characterized as extreme ... can lead to negative consequences for their children (e.g., poor partnerships with educators or lack of receipt of services, respectively)").

¹² See 34 C.F.R. § 300.503(c)(1)(i) (requiring notices to parents to be written in language accessible to the general public).

¹³ Massey & Rosenbaum, *supra* note 6, at 280-81.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 449-50.

¹⁵ See Jing Liu, *Disciplinary referrals, teachers, and the sources of racial disciplinary disproportionalities*, Brookings (Jan. 30, 2023), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/disciplinary-referrals-teachers-and-the-sources-of-racial-disciplinary-disproportionalities/>.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Dorothy E. Hines, Robb King Jr. & Donna Y. Ford, *Black Students in Handcuffs: Addressing Racial Disproportionality in School Discipline for Students with Dis/abilities*, 120 TEACHERS COLL. REC. 1, 3-4 & 16 (2018) (summarizing the research on disparate exclusionary discipline of Black students with disabilities and finding overrepresentation continuing across U.S. regions).

¹⁷ 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(B).

¹⁸ 22 PA. CODE § 16.32(b)(6).

¹⁹ 34 C.F.R. § 300.321(b)(1).

²⁰ 42 U.S.C. §§ 12131-32.

²¹ 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(4)(A)(1).

²² *Id.* § 1414(d)(4).

²³ 34 C.F.R. § 300.323(c)(1).

²⁴ 22 PA. CODE § 14.131(a)(6) (requiring that the IEP be implemented within 10 school days).

²⁵ *Id.* § 14.131(a)(1)(i)-(ix).

²⁶ 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(I).

²⁷ *Id.* § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(I)(aa).

²⁸ *Id.* § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VII); 22 PA. CODE § 14.131(a)(5) (setting the age for transition plans at 14 years old rather than the federal minimum of 16 years old).

²⁹ See 34 C.F.R. § 300.43 (describing transition services).

³⁰ 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VI).

³¹ *Id.* § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VI)(aa).

³² *Id.* § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VI)(bb).

³³ *Id.* § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(II).

³⁴ 34 C.F.R. § 300.320(a)(2)(A).

³⁵ 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(II).

³⁶ See *Endrew F. ex rel. Joseph F. v. Douglas Cnty Sch. Dist. RE-1*, 580 U.S. 386, 402 (2017) (stating that only providing a student education sufficient to make “*de minimis* progress from year to year” is inconsistent with the goals of the IDEA) (emphasis original).

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Id.* at 388.

³⁹ 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(III).

⁴⁰ *Id.* § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(IV).

⁴¹ *Id.*; 34 C.F.R. § 300.42.

⁴² Supplementary Aides and Services, Pennsylvania Dept. of Education, Bureau of Special Education, https://www.pattan.net/getmedia/178bfa87-3ee6-4ab0-9efb-dc55ee88319f/2SupAids_Planning_for_the_Future_DHHTimeline.

⁴³ 34 C.F.R. § 300.34.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VII).

⁴⁶ *Id.* § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(IV).

⁴⁷ 22 PA. CODE. § 16.32(d)(3).

⁴⁸ *Id.* § 14.132.

⁴⁹ 34 C.F.R. § 300.115 (describing the continuum of placements that must be available); *id.* § 300.116 (describing what considerations must go into the placement decision).

⁵⁰ See *id.* § 300.14 (students should be educated with children who are nondisabled to the maximum extent appropriate).

⁵¹ 22 PA. CODE § 14.131(a)(1).

⁵² *Id.* § 14.131(a)(3).

⁵³ *Id.* § 14.105(c)(1)(i).

⁵⁴ *Id.* § 14.105(c)(1)(ii).

⁵⁵ *Id.* § 14.105(c)(1)(iii).

⁵⁶ *Id.* § 14.131(a)(1)-(3).

⁵⁷ *Id.* § 14.131(a)(4).

⁵⁸ 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(V).

⁵⁹ See *id.* § 1418 (describing data reporting obligations under the IDEA).

⁶⁰ 34 C.F.R. § 300.613.

⁶¹ 20 U.S.C. § 1400(c)(5)(B); 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(B)(i); 34 C.F.R. § 300.322.

⁶² 34 C.F.R. § 300.324(a)(1).

⁶³ See *IEP Tips and Strategies For Parents To Use Before, During & After IEP Meetings*, COPAA (July 18, 2024), <https://www.copaa.org/blogpost/895540/502922/IEP-Tips--Strategies-For-Parents-To-Use-Before-During--After-IEP-Meetings>.

⁶⁴ *Id.*

⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ 34 C.F.R. § 300.300(b) (describing parental consent required to proceed with special education services).

⁶⁷ *Id.* § 300.300(d).

IEP MEETING CHECKLIST

August 2026

This checklist, a companion document to ELC-PA's fact sheet *How to Navigate an IEP Meeting*, provides specific guidance on what to do before, during, and after an IEP meeting. For more information about a checklist item, please refer to the fact sheet at the page numbers indicated.

BEFORE THE IEP MEETING:

Two weeks before:

- ☐ Request a copy of your child's most recent IEP.
- ☐ Request a copy of the ***draft*** IEP the school may have prepared and if it is not available, request to see it as soon as it becomes available and in advance of the IEP meeting [*see fact sheet, p. 8*].
- ☐ Request a copy of your child's most recent evaluation or re-evaluation report (RR) [*see fact sheet, p. 8*].
 - **CONSIDER:** Adding suggestions from the Evaluation Report that are not included in the IEP.
- ☐ If you plan to have an attorney join you at the IEP meeting, inform the IEP Team so that the District can notify their attorney [*see fact sheet, p. 3*].
- ☐ If you need any disability-related accommodations to participate in the meeting, request them in writing [*see fact sheet, p. 3*].
- ☐ If you need translation services, inform the school that you will need a translator and what language you speak [*see fact sheet, p. 3*].
- ☐ Request copies of your child's progress reports and any significant classwork completed since the last IEP meeting [*see fact sheet, p. 8*].
 - **CONSIDER:** Compare your child's most recent IEP goals to their progress reports. Is your child making progress toward their specific goals? If not, bring this to the attention of the school team. Consider whether your child's goals need to be revised or deleted and whether new goals should be added. What changes to the IEP would enable your child to make progress? If something is working, consider whether additional time or frequency of the service would help your child.

One week before:

- ☐ Request a copy of the draft IEP again, if the school has not yet provided it [see *fact sheet*, p. 8].
- ☐ Draft a statement outlining your concerns, including services in your child's IEP that were provided, concerns regarding lack of progress, new behavioral supports that should be added, etc. [see *fact sheet*, p. 9]. Make a list of what has worked well this past year and what has not [see *fact sheet*, p. 9].
- ☐ Write down any questions you have for your school regarding your child's behavior, needs, goals, services, specialized education, placement, etc. [see *fact sheet*, pp. 4-9].
- ☐ Provide a list of your major concerns to the IEP Team.
- ☐ Let the school know if anyone else will be joining you at the meeting [see *fact sheet*, p. 3].
Note: You have a right to invite anyone who has knowledge of your child to the meeting [See *fact sheet*, p. 3]. You don't need the school's permission to invite someone, but it is helpful to let the school know in advance if any additional person will be joining you for the IEP meeting.

DURING THE IEP MEETING:

- ☐ Ask any questions you have throughout the meeting. If a goal, service, academic assessment or progress note, etc., is unclear, ask the school staff to explain it [see *fact sheet*, pp. 8-9]. You are not expected to be an expert in special education.
- ☐ If you are receiving interpretation services, make sure your interpreter is translating every word that you and the IEP Team are saying. If you are not getting quality interpretation, then you should reschedule the meeting for when an appropriate interpreter is available [see *fact sheet*, p. 3].
- ☐ Take notes to help you remember what the IEP Team agreed to and what was discussed [see *fact sheet*, p. 9].
 - **CONSIDER:** Inviting a person to join the IEP Team meeting to take notes.
- ☐ Review your list and questions from before the meeting.
 - Request any additional services you feel are needed [see *fact sheet*, pp. 6-9].
 - **CONSIDER:** Does your child need speech therapy, occupational therapy, or other services not listed in the IEP? Does your child need to have certain services more often or for longer periods of time?
 - If your child has behavioral concerns, request a Functional Behavioral Assessment and a Positive Behavior Support Plan. If your child already has such a plan, but still has behavioral concerns, you can ask for a new assessment and/or an amended plan [see *fact sheet*, p. 4].
 - Ask your school to review each of your child's goals and explain how they plan to support your child so they can accomplish their goals [see *fact sheet*, pp. 5-6, 9].
 - Ask whether your child is eligible for extended school year (ESY) [see *fact sheet*, p. 7].

- Review transportation services. Are they adequate for your child? How will they get to school each day next year? [*see fact sheet, p. 6*].
- If your child is 14 or older, discuss their transition plan. Do you have concerns about skills they need to prepare for life after high school? Do they need assessments to identify their interests? Do they need to build certain skills to apply for jobs or support independent living? [*see fact sheet, pp. 4-5*].
- ☐ Before the meeting ends, check to see whether everything was addressed. If not, you can email the IEP Team with your questions or concerns.
- ☐ **REMEMBER:** If you need more time or have more questions, you can request another IEP Team meeting. You are allowed to request an IEP meeting at any time [*see fact sheet, p. 3*].

AFTER THE IEP MEETING:

- ☐ Send the IEP Team an email listing all the changes they agreed to make to your child's IEP [*see fact sheet, p. 9*].
- ☐ Make sure the Notice of Recommended Placement (NOREP) lists every service that you proposed, even those that were rejected by the team [*see fact sheet, p. 10*].
- ☐ Make sure the NOREP and IEP reflect your child's educational placement or any agreement to a change in placement.
- ☐ **Within 10 calendar days**, you must sign the NOREP, saying you “agree” or “disagree” with the draft IEP [*see fact sheet, p. 10*]. If this is your child's first IEP, your child's services cannot begin until you sign the NOREP.
- ☐ If you do not agree with the proposed IEP, you should check the “I do not approve” box on the NOREP/PWN. You then have a number of options to address the conflict with the school. See ELC-PA's fact sheet on [Resolving Special Education Disagreements](#) for resources on what to do next [*see fact sheet, p. 10*].