

Chapter 7 - Roles of IEP Team Members

A typical IEP team meeting will include the following people: You (Parent/Care Provider), Student, Case Manager, Administrator, and General Education Teacher. If necessary, additional participants might be asked to join the meeting, and these could include the following: Service Support Providers, Counselor, School Psychologist, Outside Service Provider, and Translator. Described below are the roles that each of these members provide in the IEP meeting.

Roles of IEP Team Members

Case Manager

This member is the primary service provider for your child. It is usually a teacher, but if your child has very specific issues (such as only having a speech issue and only accessing a single service of speech and language support) then it might be the person that provides the main support for that issue. This is the person who writes the majority of the IEP, runs the meeting, makes sure that all areas of need are addressed, and will provide you with a final, signed copy of the IEP after the meeting has successfully concluded. This is the person you will probably have the most contact with during the course of the IEP. He or she will send you the IEP report cards when required, will update you on issues discussed at the IEP, and be your first contact if you have any concerns with your child's education or support.

In cases where the issues or services are very complex, or when in the past there has been a great deal of contention between you and the school, the case manager might not run the IEP, but instead an administrator or district representative might run the IEP. The other duties of the case manager remain the same, unless in the course of the IEP it is decided that someone else will write the necessary updates to the IEP and provide you with a copy. If that is the case, it should be included in the notes so that everyone is clear that this duty has changed hands.

Service Support Provider

There might be more than one person filling this role. Any service that your child receives, such as speech and language or adapted physical education, should have a representative at the annual and triennial IEP. The service support provider's role is to review the progress of that service, discuss whether goals were completed, explain what caused the goal to not be completed if it was not, and to present new goals for the service for the coming IEP year. They will answer any questions you have about the service, and during other parts of the IEP they might have suggestions on how their service can support whatever issue is being discussed.

If this is an addendum IEP, and the issue being addressed does not relate to their service, a service support provider is not required to attend. Additionally, if there has been success on goals and little change in the service being provided, a service support provider might contact you prior to an IEP, review their aspects of the IEP with you, and

with your permission be excused from attending the IEP. If there are no issues with this service, and all your questions have been answered, this is fine to do. Most service support providers serve huge numbers of students, so unless you really need them to attend, it is a kindness to let them handle their part by phone and let them spend their working hours serving students directly.

Administrator

The administrator's role is to approve of the services and programs being implemented for the student. They represent the school and the district, and all decisions related to costs are made by the administrator. They also will address behavior and attendance issues, and assign any consequences that need to occur because of those issues.

The administrator will usually be the one to address the most serious issues related to the IEP, and the issues that are most challenging. They will address any safety issues, and any school wide issues, and be a key member if a behavior plan is being developed.

Counselor

Your child's school counselor, if they have one, is not required to attend an IEP. Often they do though, especially at the high school level since class selections will be key to completing or supporting certain goals. A counselor's role at the IEP would include reviewing the student's current grades and progress in class, discussing the schedule of classes for the next semester or school year, and reviewing your child's progress towards completing graduation or transition requirements. Additionally, a school counselor would be able to discuss school based emotional supports, such as counselor led discussion groups that deal with issues such as grief, depression, or substance abuse. Many schools have these types of support groups.

If a counselor does not attend then the case manager or the administrator usually fills these duties. In some cases, where an administrator is not available or if the issues being addressed at the IEP are not serious (or there are no issues at the IEP) a counselor might attend as the administrator. In that case they would fill the duties of both the counselor and administrator, and sign the IEP as the administrator.

General Education Teacher

The general education teacher's role varies depending on your child. Legally, the IEP team needs to have a general education teacher if your child is in any general education classes or if your child might be in the general education environment in the course of the IEP year. The general education teacher involved can be any general education teacher, so possibly it could be someone that has never met your child and will never have them in class. The role of a general education teacher is to provide information about the general education environment and feedback on how your child could be supported in such an environment. They can explain the feasibility of implementing different accommodations and the requirements of the general education

environment that your child will be expected to fulfill (or what will need to be modified in order for your child to participate).

Depending on your child, the general education teacher invited should be more specific. If your child is mostly in general education classes, then this ought to be a teacher your child has, usually an academic teacher, and it should be either the teacher of the academic area your child's disability most affects (for example, if reading skills are your child's main disability, then your child's English teacher would be a good choice) or a teacher that your child is having difficulty with (either academic or behavioral). If your child is in academic classes in a specialized environment, and only has elective classes in general education, then that would be the teacher to invite. If your child is currently only in specialized classes but might join general education for an elective in the near future, then the teacher of that elective should be invited in order to talk about the program's requirements, to meet your child in advance, and for the team to determine if this environment is a good place for your child. If your child is in a highly specialized program with no general education classes, and no chance of being in one in the next year, then no general education teacher needs to attend the meeting.

Whatever the situation, the IEP team should contain a general education teacher who can contribute the most information. That hopefully is someone who knows your child, has experience with him or her, and can provide information that will help the IEP team better arrange your child's services and supports to improve their educational success. As a parent, you have input as to which general education teacher should attend. If there is a particular subject you have concerns about, or a certain teacher you want to attend, then ask the case manager at the time of scheduling the meeting to invite that person.

School Psychologist

School psychologists are required to attend any triennials for students with academic or emotional disability classifications. Prior to the triennial they will have assessed your child and gathered data from you, your child, and school personnel to generate a report that indicates your child's present levels of ability, current disability qualification, and whether your child still qualifies under that disability. It will also include suggestions to the team for possible programs or supports to benefit your child. Based on the requests in the assessment plan, made either by you or school personnel, the report might also include information about your child's emotional or social abilities and address issues that might relate to these topics.

At the IEP the school psychologist will present this report, review the information contained in it, and present their determination of your child's disability classification and whether your child continues to qualify for services. Additionally, for triennials the school psychologist usually runs the meeting instead of the case manager, and will also run all initial IEPs.

A school psychologist might attend any meeting in the role as support for behavioral or mental health issues. They can discuss school based counseling options, options for more intensive off site counseling (if your state supports that), and help develop behavior plans. They might develop or help the team develop behavioral or emotional

support goals, and also contribute information about social skills issues and development.

Outside Service Provider

If your child has a service provided outside of school, either provided by the district or a private service that you provide for your child, then a representative should attend. This happens most often with mental health services, since most students who see a therapist do so outside of school, even if state funding provides for it in some way. If your child is involved in any support group or program that provides services and helps your child prepare for the future, you should consider having someone from that group attend the IEP. This is particularly important as your child gets older. These agencies will be working on skills that address the needs of your child, and the IEP team should be aware of what they are doing so that all members can work in concert to help your child be as successful as possible.

Any service provided through the school, even one that happens outside of school, should have a representative who will be invited by the school. If there is a service that you independently provide then it will be your responsibility to invite a representative to the meeting.

Translator

In the case when a participant (usually the parent or guardian) who has limited English skills is part of the IEP team, a translator will be provided. It is important that the translator be there to translate, not interpret, what is being said. The team member receiving the translation should ask questions when clarification is needed. Please note that if a verbal translation is given at the meeting then a written translation of the IEP documents is not legally required. Many districts will still do it to help support the parent, but it is something the district decides to do, not something required by law.

Please note that IEP team members might have multiple roles in a meeting, or have a wider area of expertise and be able to contribute additional information in parts of the IEP typically outside of their assigned role. Role descriptions show what is required of the person filling that role at the IEP. The actual person who takes on that role might have a lot more to contribute in a wide variety of areas. Every IEP team is different, and different people have different strengths and areas of knowledge. As an IEP team it is important to be open minded to everyone's contribution no matter what the topic. Thinking outside of the box and hearing perspectives from people who are not in the middle of a certain topic can lead to very effective solutions.