

# My Child at School

A Champions Together Course for Parents

# The IEP Conference

Session 2



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# My Child at School


A Champions Together Course for Parents

# The IEP Conference

Session **2**



NAME \_\_\_\_\_



In developing an IEP for a child under IDEA, the IEP team shall consider the strengths of the child, concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their child, and evaluation results.”

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)



Welcome back to

# My Child at School

A Champions Together Course for Parents

Session 2  
School

## Getting Started

Welcome back!

Did everyone sign the sign-in form?

Name tags on?

Everyone smiling?

Great! Let's begin.

## Activities from Last Session

At the last session, you agreed to complete activities with your families. As I read the activities, check the ones you completed.

Check if completed:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I started a file of information about special education. I concentrated on areas that benefited my child and his specific needs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I identified my local Parent Training and Information Center.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I wrote down three questions or comments about the Parent Center handouts and will discuss them with the parent group.

*At the end of the last session, you made a commitment to complete the activities listed above. Tell the group how you did with your activities. If you had a great success, share your excitement with the group. If you had problems, maybe the group can give you suggestions. Your work between sessions is the most important part of this course, so let's take time to discuss our progress and be helpful to one another.*



TELL THE  
GROUP

Group Leader: Allow about 15 minutes to report and discuss progress with activities from last session.

## The IEP Conference

At the last session you learned that parents of children with disabilities must participate in the planning and decision-making for their child's special education program. This happens when the parents and the educational team write an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the child.

An IEP is written at the IEP conference. For some parents, attending the IEP conference is an intimidating process. There can be a room full of unfamiliar faces. Many of the individuals may have a name that starts with "Dr." Some people at the table may have a file folder full of information about the child.

In this session we will discuss ways to help you feel more comfortable at the IEP conference and ways to help your child's school follow through with the recommendations of the IEP.

*For some parents, attending the IEP conference is an intimidating process.*

## Lesson 1: Before the Conference

The IEP conference is where decisions are made about your child's Individualized Education Program. The team decides what additional services your child will receive and how often. Parents should be educated, informed members of the IEP team.

When a parent is knowledgeable and prepared, this helps to establish a "level playing field" for the parent and the educational team. This increases the level of respect for the parent, and helps make the IEP conference a less intimidating process for the parent.

What can you do to become knowledgeable and prepared parents?

- ※ Understand the rules and regulations pertaining to the IEP process.
- ※ Gather as much information as possible before the conference.
- ※ Find out who will be attending the conference.
- ※ Prepare an agenda of items we would like to have discussed at the conference. Include any questions or concerns we have regarding our child's education.
- ※ Obtain copies of any reports that will be shared at the conference and review them before the meeting. Written reports can be difficult to read, stir up emotions and have language that is unfamiliar. Having the reports early allows us to settle ourselves emotionally and prepare us to ask questions.

The written IEP describes what your child can already do and what he/she needs to learn for the next year. The IEP team must consider your child's strengths and your concerns about your child's education. Write down three of your child's strengths and two concerns about your child's education.

EXERCISE

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Champions  
Together!

TELL THE  
GROUP



Share with the group one of your child's strengths and one of your concerns about your child's education. We will look for similarities among our answers.

*Parents should be educated,  
informed members of the IEP team.*



## Lesson 2: At the Conference

At the IEP conference, the team will discuss several items. The team will discuss how your child is currently performing in school, your child's areas of deficit, and ways to help close that gap.

Our child's IEP must include:

- × Present level of educational performance
- × Annual goals
- × Short-term instructional objectives/benchmarks
- × How our child's progress will be evaluated
- × Special services our child will receive
- × The extent of our child's participation in general education programs
- × Language(s) or mode(s) of communication
- × Necessary accommodations for academic FAPE and state assessments

At an IEP conference, there will be many people gathered to talk about your child. This can be an emotional process for many parents. The more prepared you are, the easier it is to cope with this.

Parents who have experience attending IEP conferences have offered the following suggestions:

- 1) Don't go alone — Bring someone with you to the conference. This can be a grandparent, friend or other person who will help you advocate for your child.
- 2) Ask questions — If you do not understand a statement, acronym or report, keep asking questions until you understand.
- 3) Assign a note-taker — Ask the person who comes with you to take notes at the conference. You will be too busy participating in the conference to take sufficient notes. Another option is to use a tape recorder at the conference.

- 4) Sit next to the note-taker — This will allow you to be certain that items that are important to you are included in the notes.
- 5) Dress professionally — If you want to be respected and taken seriously, show up for the conference dressed as you would for an important business meeting at work. Be sure, however, that you are comfortable.
- 6) Adjourn the conference if necessary — If there is a decision made at the conference with which you do not agree or that needs further investigation, remember that you have the right to adjourn the conference and reconvene at a later date.
- 7) Bring food — Some parents feel that bringing a small snack to share at the conference will encourage a feeling of community and help enhance your relationship with the educational team.
- 8) Pick your battles — There will be many decisions made during your child's educational career. You may not agree with every decision that is made. Choose the aspects of your child's education that are most important to you and stand your ground on those issues. By avoiding conflict on a regular basis, you have more credibility when it really counts.

EXERCISE

 **IEP CONFERENCE**

The legal minimum number of participants at an IEP conference is three: the parent, a special education teacher and a representative of the local school district. Usually, there are several additional participants, including:

Director of special education (this role can be taken by the facilitator of your group)

Parent(s)

Grandparent

Family friend

Special education teacher

General education teacher

Itinerant teacher

One-on-one aide

Occupational therapist

Physical therapist

Speech pathologist

Social worker

Supervisor of your child's area of disability

We will read each of the situations below and discuss what each of the IEP conference participants might have to offer in determining the best course of action for the child involved.

#### **Situation 1: Related service discontinued during Extended School Year (ESY)**

Johnny is 11 years old. He has a developmental delay and a hearing impairment. He requires a one-on-one aide, occupational therapy for personal care tasks, physical therapy for an uneven gait, speech therapy for articulation and language development, and he participates in a social skills training group with the social worker. His parents would like his physical therapy to continue over the summer. The school district does not think physical therapy is necessary over the summer because it is the opinion of the educational team that there will be no regression of his abilities without this service.

#### **Situation 2: Change of placement**

Susie is 8 years old. She has autism and an emotional/behavioral disorder. The school has hired a one-on-one aide to assist with her behaviors, but she is still disruptive in the classroom to the point that it interferes with her learning. She receives weekly counseling as part of her behavior intervention plan and itinerant services from a learning disability teacher. The school district wants to place Susie in a school they feel could better meet her needs. There will be a 35-minute bus ride to the new school. Susie's parents want her to be educated in her home school district.

After the IEP conference, your actions will impact the success of the goals

## Lesson 3: After the Conference

and objectives determined at the conference.

You may experience an array of emotions following the conference, ranging from relief to sadness to anger at others. This would be a good time to contact the members of your support system. They can help you cope with your feelings by listening and helping you plan your next steps.

There are several follow-up steps you can take to ensure the success of your child's IEP.

- 1) Send a letter to your school district confirming your understanding of decisions that were made at your child's IEP conference.
- 2) Identify who is responsible for implementing these various decisions, and when they should be accomplished. Include this information in your letter.
- 3) Monitor your child's program. Don't wait until the next IEP conference to find out if your child's objectives were met. Check with your child's teacher or other service providers regularly for information on your child's progress.
- 4) Monitor special services. Sometimes, for various reasons, appointments for special services are cancelled or postponed. Some parents keep a record of all sessions held with special service providers to ensure that their child receives the designated number of sessions.

### Independent Evaluations

If parents do not agree with the results of a school evaluation, they can request an evaluation by other school personnel or they can seek an independent/private evaluation. If the school district accepts the results of that evaluation, the district may pay for the evaluation and provide additional services.

Located at the end of this manual is a sample letter to a school district following an IEP conference.

**TAKING IT  
HOME**

Located at the end of this manual is a sample chart to keep a record of our child's special services.

**TAKING IT HOME**

It is good to demonstrate at the IEP conference the progress your child is making at home. Taking a progress chart to the conference is helpful. See the sample chart below.

**EXERCISE**

Child's Name: <i>John</i>								
Behavior	Scale	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
<i>Reading aloud at least 15 minutes per day</i>	✓ = yes 0 = no	✓	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Washing hands before meals</i>	<i># of meals hands were washed</i>	1	3	2	1	0	2	2
<i>Finishing homework</i>	✓ = yes 0 = no N = no homework	✓	0	✓	0	✓	N	N


Each person in the group will write down three areas in which they would like to chart their own child's progress.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Fill out the sample chart below with the criteria for your child.

Child's Name:								
Behavior	Scale	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S

**TAKING IT  
HOME**

 There is a blank chart at the back of this manual for each of you to use during the week. Next week you will each report on your child's progress.

## Key Points

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Let's review the key points from this session:

- × The IEP should list areas where your child needs improvement and state what special services will be provided for your child.
- × The IEP is rewritten each year. The goals should reflect expected achievement within one school year.
- × The IEP must include the child's present level of performance.
- × The IEP conference is a less intimidating process when parents are knowledgeable and prepared.
- × Parents become knowledgeable and prepared by understanding the IEP process, gathering information ahead of time and bringing their own agenda to the IEP conference.
- × At the IEP conference, the team will discuss how the child is currently performing in school, the child's areas of deficit, and ways to help close that gap.
- × Parents can increase their comfort level at the IEP conference by bringing someone with them, assigning a note-taker and dressing professionally.
- × After the IEP conference, parents can send a letter to their school district confirming the decisions that were made at the IEP conference.

## Taking it Home

You have learned about Individualized Education Programs. You have learned what to expect at an IEP conference and what to do after the conference. You have learned to keep a record of the services your child receives and to set goals and monitor your child's progress in meeting those goals.

Listed below are the activities for the week. As I read each activity, write your initials as a commitment to your family and the parent group to complete the activity before the next session.

### ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

Parent's Initials:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I will monitor my child's progress in the three behaviors I have chosen. I will keep track of that progress by using the chart at the end of this manual.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I will begin using the chart at the end of this manual to record special services my child receives.



## Closing the Session

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Take home this manual to remind you of your activities for the week. You have my name and telephone number so you can call me during the week if you have questions. I will collect the pencils so we will have them at the next session.

**Group Leader:** Collect pencils.

The next page in this manual is a tear-out page. You can place the tear-out page in a prominent place in your home (like on the refrigerator). We can check each activity as we complete it.

The **sample letter and chart** are in the back of this manual.

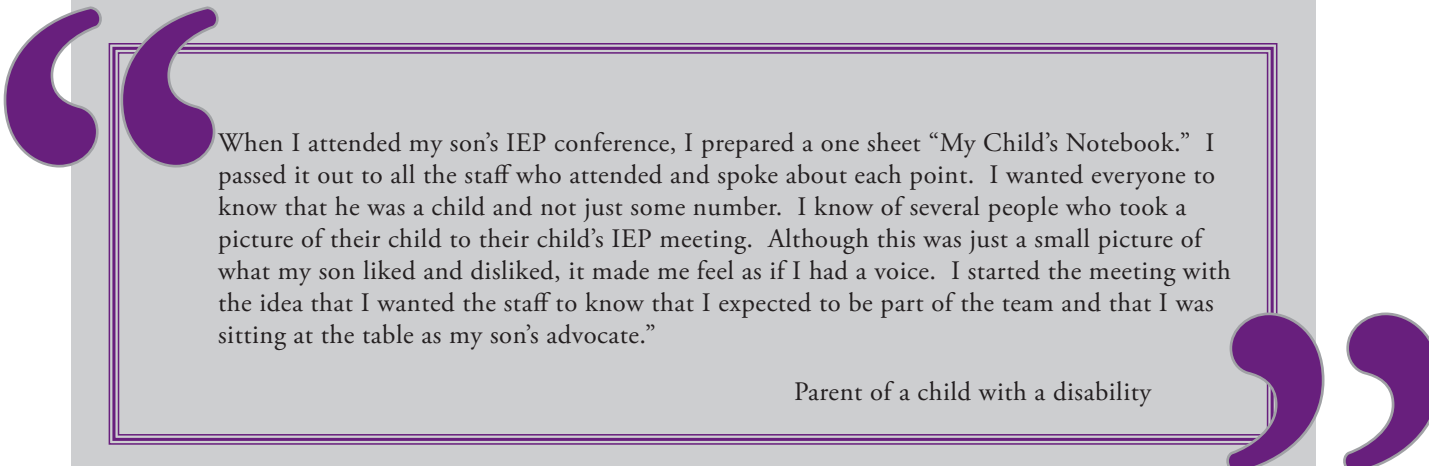
In the next session, you will continue to build on what you have learned. You will also take more time to talk about your activities.

Remember, at the end of the next session you will hold a graduation ceremony and receive your certificates.

**APPLAUD FOR A GREAT SESSION! COME ON, A BIG HEARTY ROUND OF APPLAUSE.**



APPLAUD



When I attended my son's IEP conference, I prepared a one sheet "My Child's Notebook." I passed it out to all the staff who attended and spoke about each point. I wanted everyone to know that he was a child and not just some number. I know of several people who took a picture of their child to their child's IEP meeting. Although this was just a small picture of what my son liked and disliked, it made me feel as if I had a voice. I started the meeting with the idea that I wanted the staff to know that I expected to be part of the team and that I was sitting at the table as my son's advocate."

Parent of a child with a disability

# Activities for the Week

## ACTIVITIES FOR WEEK #1

*Check (√) when completed*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I will monitor my child's progress in the three behaviors I have chosen. I will keep track of that progress by using the chart at the end of this manual.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I will begin using the chart at the end of this manual to record special services my child receives.





## Sample letter to a school district following an IEP conference

Date

Name of director of special education

School district address

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

I/We am/are writing to confirm the decisions that were made at the IEP conference for my/our child \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ (DATE).

My/our child will be receiving the following special services:

Physical Therapy                      30 min. per week

Speech Therapy                        30 min. per week

Counseling                              30 min. per week

My/our child will participate in general education for the following subjects:

Art

Music

Gym

Lunch

Recess

My/our child is eligible for extended school year service.

My/our child will receive special transportation to school.

The school district has agreed to pay for an assistive technology evaluation. My/our child's hearing impaired itinerant teacher has been assigned the responsibility to schedule the appointment. My/our child's case manager has been assigned the responsibility to coordinate transportation to the appointment and accompany my/our child to the appointment.

Please let me know if there is any discrepancy between this letter and your records.

Thank you again for your dedication to providing the best possible educational program for my/our child.

Sincerely,

Your name

cc: teacher, student file, individuals who attended the meeting

# Sample chart to keep a record of your child's special services

Child's Name:

School Year:

Type of Service	Dates this service was provided												

Notes:







# **Academic Development Institute**

**Founded in 1984**

The Academic Development Institute (ADI) works with families, schools, and communities so that all children may become self-directed learners, avid readers, and responsible citizens, respecting themselves and those around them. ADI's vision is of an American landscape filled with distinct school communities reflecting the hopes and dreams of the people intimately attached to them. To this image of the school as a community, ADI is devoted. When the school functions as a community, its constituents (students, parents, teachers, staff) associate with one another and share common values about the education of children. At the root, members of the school community assume responsibility for one another. Those children become our children, and parents are not external agents, but full partners in the education of their children and of each other's children. Teachers are not isolated practitioners of pedagogy, but professionals integrated into the web of community and buoyed by common purpose.



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