

You Got This: Taking a Leadership Role in Your IEP Meeting [English and Spanish versions]

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What is an IEP and who is it for?



An IEP is an individualized education program for students like you (ages of 3 to 21) who receive special education services in public schools. An IEP is a legal document that describes the help that you and other students with disabilities will receive at school.

What is an IEP meeting?



Once a school year, an IEP meeting is set up to help you and your support team review and update your IEP. The meeting goes over your goals and plans, as well as the services you will receive.

What is the transition plan in your IEP?



In high school, a transition plan is added to your IEP. By law, you must have a transition plan by age 16 at the latest. A transition plan includes your goals for after high school and picks out support services to help you achieve your goals. The transition plan is based on your needs, strengths, skills, and interests.

Benefits in leading your IEP



There are benefits linked to taking a leadership role in your IEP meeting. High school students who lead their IEP meetings tend to have higher graduation rates, go to college more often, and make more money in jobs after high school.

What can help you lead your IEP meeting?

There are 5 steps you can take that will help you to lead your IEP meeting:

1 Understand your rights & your IEP. The more you know and understand about the IEP process, the more active you can become in your leadership role. Ask an adult in the school like your counselor, teacher, or case manager to help you know more about your IEP. Learn about the legal rights you have as a student with a disability (bit.ly/idea-quick-guide) and read your IEP (including your transition plan).



2 Know yourself. Make a list of your strengths and interests. Also, write down what things help you and what things make it hard to do well in school and in life. This will help you clearly say what you want from your high school at your next IEP meeting.

3 Create goals for your IEP. Create goals for school, work and living on your own, you can discuss these with your school team. Your goals should be based on your strengths, interests, and needs. The goals that you create will be the basis for your IEP meeting.



4 Prepare to lead your IEP. Think about what parts of the IEP you feel comfortable leading. For example, you can create a PowerPoint about your goals to share during the IEP meeting. Remember, you do not have to lead the whole meeting.

5 Practice leading your IEP. Practice the parts of the IEP that you are going to lead with someone you are comfortable with.



CONCLUSION

The most important thing to know is that your IEP and the IEP meeting is about YOU! Remember that having a disability does not define you and doesn't limit what you can do in and with your life. You can have a bright future and your IEP can help you succeed!

This tip sheet is a sequel to [Teens on IEPs: Making my "Transition" Services Work for Me](#)

Resources

Biebel, K., Golden, L., Huckabee, S., & Ellison, M. L. (2017). Translating Evidence for Successful Transitions (TEST): Supporting student-led transition planning for students with emotional disturbances.

Navigating IEP Meetings. (2020, January 22). Retrieved from <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/ieps/navigating-iep-meetings>

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