STEPS TO READ, DEVELOP, AND UNDERSTAND AN IEP

The IEP document is a lot to absorb. You will be better prepared to support your child when you review the IEP draft before meeting with the IEP team for the first time. A child's education is worth taking time to read for understanding.

1. Identify Your Child's Eligibility Category

Take note of the eligibility category that entitles the student to an IEP. The eligibility category is listed on the "Cover Page" of the IEP document, near the name, birth date, and other personal details about the student. This category is decided during the evaluation review meeting.

My child's eligibility category is _____.

2. Read the IEP Draft Before the IEP Meeting

Be sure to ask for a copy of the IEP draft with enough time to look it over before the meeting.

I requested a copy of the IEP draft on _____.

Remember, the school's first version is a DRAFT IEP, and family members of the IEP team have the right to participate in program development.

The amount of time a family needs for review also might depend on whether the document is translated into a language besides English. Under state and federal law, parents have the right to information about their child's education in a language they can understand.

☐ Yes, I require that the IEP be translated to _____.

I requested translation of the IEP on _____.

☐ No, I do not require that the IEP be translated to another language.

3. Review the Service Matrix

Located halfway through the IEP, the Service Matrix looks like a chart or grid. These are the suggested services and they are how a student receives Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) in each area where the student has significant deficits that make them eligible for special education. If a child will transition to a different level of school within the year, there may be two grids. One grid is for the rest of the current year, and the other grid is for the next academic year at the new school. Service minutes are often slightly different for elementary, middle, and high school.

How many minutes are being offered to support the student in each are of specially designed instruction? (The SDI supports at least one goal for each subject area.)

Subject	Service	Minutes

PAVE's policy is to offer support, information, and training to families, professionals, and those interested in various topics. Please note that PAVE is not a legal services agency and cannot provide legal advice or representation. The information is not intended for legal counsel and should not be used as a substitute for legal advice.

What Related/Ancillary Services is your child eligible to receive? (These are therapeutic services, such as occupational, physical, or speech therapy. Mental health counseling and parent training may be listed as Related Services.

Service	Frequency	Minutes

Sometimes Related Services are offered through "consultation," meaning that a specialist will make recommendations to school staff but won't work directly with the student. Are any of your child's services being provided through consultation?

Service	Frequency	Minutes

4. Review the Present Level Statement

The Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLOP for short) are within the first few pages of the IEP. This section of the IEP explains why the student needs services.

Does the information in the present level statement reflect your student's current abilities and needs?

☐ Yes ☐ No

What, if anything, should be added?

5. Review the proposed goals

Are the goals Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

*Highlight goals that are not written as SMART goals to discuss during the IEP meeting.

Are any of the goals too easy for your child?

☐ Yes ☐ No

*Highlight goals that are too easy to discuss with the IEP team.

6. Review the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Statement

Read and review information about where your child will spend their day. *Note any concerns or feedback to discuss with the team.

7. Review the accommodations and modifications

Read and review information about accommodations and modifications. *Note anything that may need to be added and any questions you have about how they will be provided in the educational setting.

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