



# MONTANA EMPOWERMENT CENTER, INC.

*Montana's Parent Training  
Information Center*

Developing an effective and appropriate Individualized Education Program or IEP for your child is essential to your child's success.

While IEPs typically cover a 12-month period, they help to create the foundation for your child's future. Think of the adult your child will become. When planning, think well beyond just one year. Get ready early, actively participate and stay connected throughout the year.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) requires schools to give parents of students with disabilities adequate notice (7-10 days) to participate in the IEP meeting. This notice is called Invitation to Meeting/Notice. Be sure to read, respond and return the invitation to Meeting/Prior notice as soon as possible keeping a copy for your records.

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# PARENT CHECKLIST FOR IEP MEETINGS

This list is meant to point out some basic procedural information about your rights as an equal member of the IEP team.

## Prior to the meeting:

- Review last year's IEP, Progress Reports and Report Cards.
- Talk with your child to let them know that you are working with their teacher to help them at school. Ask for their input and write down what they say verbatim.
- The IEP meeting must be held at a time and place that is convenient for all team members, including the parent. Notice should be in writing, in your native language and list all who will attend.
- Consider whether it is appropriate to invite your child to the meeting.
- The law requires that a meeting to review the IEP be held annually but parents can call for a meeting any time they believe that an issue relating to the IEP needs to be discussed. Your request should be in writing.
- Be prepared to address your child's strengths and the educational concerns you have for them.
- Make and bring a list of the questions/issues you would like discussed. Give the list to the special education teacher a few days before the meeting. Use bullet points and try to limit the list to 3-5 points.
- You may want to provide results from assessments/tests given to your child by professionals outside the school since the last IEP meeting.
- You may bring people to the meeting who have "special knowledge or expertise about your child". This may include advocates, health providers and other professionals, but can also include family members, friends and others who are familiar with your child.
- If an educator whose subject or related service area will be discussed needs to be excused, parents must give written permission and the educator must submit written input to the parent in advance of the meeting.
- Inquire as to whether a draft of the IEP has been prepared for use at the meeting. If so, ask for a copy in advance of the meeting.
- In Montana, both parties need to agree before the meeting can be recorded. An exception to the rule is when persons wishing to record give notice, reasonably in advance of the meeting (in writing), of their intent to record.

## During the meeting:

- Make sure you know the role of everyone who attends the meeting and that your contact information at the top of the first page is accurate.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand what is being discussed.
- During the IEP year that your child turns 16, the IEP must include a transition section.
- When the IEP team discusses reevaluation and extended school year, ask for an explanation of those sections or any section you do not understand.
- It is best to have the notes read at the end of the meeting and before signing unless you will take the IEP home to sign later.
- There are two lines on the signature page for the parent to sign. The first signature line indicates only that you were in attendance and participated. Always sign that you participated.
- Your signature on the second line indicates that you APPROVE the IEP in its entirety. If you have any doubt or need time to review it, DO NOT SIGN. You can ask for another meeting to continue the discussion if necessary or just return the signed IEP to the school within 2-3 days.
- If you can agree to some but not all of the provisions in the IEP, You can sign "WITH EXCEPTIONS", listing your objections to the things that you cannot agree to.
- At the end of the meeting, you are entitled to a copy of the signed IEP or a copy of the draft IEP if you have not signed.
- If you do not sign at all, the school may send a letter indicating that if you do not sign within 15 days of the date of the letter, the school will implement the IEP.
- If you have asked for certain services to be included in the IEP and the rest of the team has refused, you are entitled to receive "Prior Written Notice" which states the reasons for the refusal in writing.
- It is best to follow any oral request made at an IEP meeting for more assistance or services with a written request unless the additional services are written into the IEP during the meeting.

## Ages 14 and over: The IEP team can start the transition process at age 14. It is not required to be in the IEP until the year in which the student turns 16.

- A Transition Plan is required to be completed with the student based on their strengths, needs, interests and preferences.
- Post-Secondary Goals are developed by the IEP team based on age appropriate transition assessments.
- The Transition Plan helps students and their families plan for life after high school by setting specific Post-Secondary Goals in the areas of Employment, Education/Training, and when the IEP team deems it appropriate, Independent Living.
- The Transition Plan includes Transition Services that develop both academic and functional skills appropriate to help the student meet each Post-Secondary Goal.
- Student's rights are transferred to the student at age 18 "age of majority". To continue to participate in your child's IEP and have decision-making rights, permission must be given by the student.

## After the meeting:

- Talk with your child about the meeting and what goals they will be working on at school and at home.
- Review the IEP frequently in order to check progress.
- Check periodically with your child and the teacher to make sure the IEP is being followed.
- Communicate with your child's teachers and other team members to share successes and address any issues as they arise.
- Be sure to keep educational records organized and in a safe place.
- If you are unable to resolve a dispute concerning the IEP, you have the right to ask for assistance from OPI.
- Consider sharing a copy of the IEP with other professionals working with your child.
- Contact the MT Empowerment Center, Inc. at 1-877-870-1190 to ask questions or visit [www.mtempowermentcenter.org](http://www.mtempowermentcenter.org) for valuable resources.

