

What is a facilitated individualized education program (IEP)* meeting?

A facilitated IEP meeting is an IEP team meeting that includes an impartial facilitator who promotes effective communication and assists an IEP team in developing an acceptable IEP. The facilitator keeps the team focused on the proper development of the IEP while addressing conflicts that arise. The facilitated IEP meeting also includes all of the required team members pursuant to the Code of Federal Regulations, section 300.321.

When can parents and school districts request a facilitator?

Either parents or districts can request a facilitator when an IEP team process has been difficult and has not resulted in the district proposing an IEP. A facilitator is not used to resolve disputes unrelated to the IEP.

How is a facilitated IEP meeting different from mediation?

The purpose, participants, process, and outcomes are different. The purpose of a facilitated IEP meeting is to develop an acceptable IEP and it involves the required IEP team members and the facilitator. The facilitator will lead the team through the agenda – the legally required IEP process. The purpose of mediation is to resolve specific issues. Mediation usually involves fewer, and a more balanced number of participants, and the mediator. Mediation may deal with a broad range of issues using the mediation process; and when agreements are reached, it results in a binding mediated agreement.

Where and when is a facilitated IEP meeting held?

Similar to any IEP meeting, a facilitated IEP meeting is scheduled by the district and is held at a time and place mutually agreed upon by the parent and school. The district must give proper notice to the parent including the purpose, the time, and the place where the meeting will occur, and who will attend. Just as in any IEP meeting, parents can bring an advocate or other individuals at their discretion.

How long does the facilitated IEP meeting take?

A facilitated IEP meeting may take longer than a typical IEP meeting. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) requests a minimum of three hours. A facilitated IEP meeting can always be reconvened if consensus on the IEP is not reached at the first meeting.

Who is the facilitator?

Facilitators are individuals on the roster of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) practitioners who have experience and training in IEP development and conflict resolution. The facilitator is not a decision-maker, is impartial and does not represent the parent, the school district or the state.

How do I request a facilitator?

To request a facilitator, the parents and district must complete and sign the Request for a Facilitated IEP Meeting form. This form is available on the MDE website at www.education.state.mn.us or by calling the number below. Once there is agreement to participate in this voluntary process, ADR staff will assign a

facilitator. An attempt to convene a facilitated IEP meeting cannot be used to deny or delay a parent's right to a due process hearing.

How can the district assist in setting up the facilitated IEP meeting?

- Schedule the IEP meeting and give the ADR coordinator one week notice before the meeting date.
- Give the ADR coordinator the meeting location's address and phone number.
- Send the current IEP or a draft of the IEP to use for discussion and recent evaluation data to the Department for the facilitator to review.
- Discuss and encourage student participation with the parent, as appropriate.
- Bring the IEP form on a laptop with capability to project it on a screen, as desired.
- Bring or make a printer accessible so an IEP can be printed and distributed at the end of the meeting.

How does the ADR coordinator assist in preparing for the facilitated IEP meeting?

- Talks with both district staff and parents about the role of the facilitator, their IEP concerns, the history of the team's work, efforts made to resolve differences and the communication among the team members.
- Assigns a facilitator upon receiving the Notice of Team Meeting and shares the team's concerns with the facilitator.
- Sends confirmation of the meeting to the district, parents, and when named, an advocate.

For more information about facilitated IEP meetings and the Minnesota Department of Education's ADR Services; or to obtain this material in a different format like large print, Braille or on tape, contact:

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For TTY communication, contact the Minnesota Relay Service at 1-800-627-3529.

*All references to the IEP include the IIP (an interagency plan) and the IFSP (a plan for young children).