

South Carolina  
Department of Education

Office of Special Education  
Services



Procedures for Facilitated IEP Team Meetings

The information shared in this document describes the procedures for the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) Office of Special Education Services (OSES) Facilitated Individualized Education Program Team Meeting (FIEP) process. The FIEP is a voluntary informal dispute resolution process offered in addition to other dispute resolution options (i.e. mediation, due process hearing, and state compliance complaint). In an effort to serve South Carolina families of students receiving special education services and local education agencies (LEAs), OSES piloted the FIEP program in the 2008 - 2009 school year in select districts. Now statewide, the FIEP meeting continues to assist families and LEAs by offering facilitated IEP team meetings at no cost to the family or LEA.

A facilitated IEP team meeting is one that includes an impartial facilitator. The facilitator serves as a neutral party helping to promote communication among IEP Team members as they work toward resolving differences of opinion that may occur concerning the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The facilitator aims to keep the IEP Team on task so that the meeting purposes can be accomplished and consensus reached among team members.

Attendance at a facilitated IEP meeting is the same as any other IEP meeting. The required members of the IEP team attend the meeting, in addition to the facilitator.

In most situations, the IEP team is able to reach agreement about the identification, evaluation, educational program, placement, and the provision of a free appropriate public education through discussions and consensus decision-making. It may be appropriate to request IEP facilitation when parties have concerns about communication and trust; if parties are becoming apprehensive about the next IEP meeting; or when the parties need help focusing the IEP process on the student. IEP facilitation is designed to work best when the disagreement is child or situation specific. If a dispute raises systemic concerns or involves a situation where the parties are not willing to vary from a set position, then facilitation may not be a viable option.

## REQUESTING A FACILITATED IEP TEAM MEETING

THE REQUEST FOR A FACILITATED IEP TEAM MEETING (FIEP) CAN BE MADE BY THE DISTRICT, PARENT, GUARDIAN, OR ADULT STUDENT (18 OR OLDER).

1. The *Facilitated IEP Team Meeting Request* is made through electronic transmission (e.g. email, fax, online at [https://scoses.formstack.com/forms/fiep\\_request\\_form\\_parent](https://scoses.formstack.com/forms/fiep_request_form_parent) ) or postal mail. Printable forms are available by calling the FIEP Program Coordinator, Dr. L. Lannette Cox at 803-734-2833.
2. Upon receipt of a request, the FIEP Program Coordinator may contact the initiating party (e.g. LEA, parent/family, or adult student) to discuss the reason(s) for the request.

Please note that an FIEP will not be scheduled if the FIEP Program Coordinator determines that the issues identified by the parties are not related to special education services or otherwise determines that facilitation is not an appropriate resolution option. In such cases, the FIEP Program Coordinator will work with the party to identify other resolution possibilities.

3. The FIEP Program Coordinator will contact the other party to share the request for FIEP and provide directions for that party to grant consent to an FIEP. If the other party agrees, the FIEP Program Coordinator will notify both parties.
4. The LEA schedules an IEP team meeting at a mutually agreeable time and place, and electronically submits the current IEP along with other relevant documents to the FIEP Program Coordinator. The LEA must inform the FIEP Program Coordinator of the date, time, place, and address of the meeting.

(The OSES requires that parties requesting a facilitator do so at least ten (10) school days before the projected date of the IEP team meeting in order to give the FIEP Program Coordinator time to locate an available facilitator, gather relevant information from the LEA, and forward the relevant student information to the facilitator.)

The FIEP Program Coordinator will attempt to locate a facilitator who is available during the selected meeting time and date chosen by the IEP team. If no facilitator is available, the IEP team may choose to reschedule the meeting, or proceed without a facilitator.

5. Once the IEP date, time, and facilitator are confirmed, the FIEP Program Coordinator will contact the LEA, parent or adult student to confirm the Facilitated IEP team meeting.  
Note: Both parties will be provided a facilitator bio. If there are no objections raised within 24 hours of the confirmation notification, the FIEP continues as planned.
6. The FIEP Program Coordinator will then forward the relevant student information along with meeting details to the facilitator.
7. The facilitator will contact both parties (parent/adult student and LEA) prior to the meeting to discuss their concerns. The facilitator will create an agenda for the IEP team meeting.

8. At the beginning of the FIEP, the facilitator will discuss group meeting norms, share the agenda, and ask all participants to complete the FIEP agreement form. If the meeting is virtual, the facilitator will read the FIEP agreement form with the understanding that continuing equates to agreement to the terms outlined in the participation agreement by all parties.
9. During the FIEP, the facilitator is required to keep IEP team members on task, clarify points of agreement and disagreement, provide team members with opportunities to consider alternative solutions, and keep the meeting focused on the appropriate needs of the student.
10. At the conclusion of the meeting, the facilitator will provide a QR code to each participant to provide feedback (paper forms available by request).

While the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) is happy to provide facilitators to attend IEP team meetings, there are many details to keep in mind.

- Facilitators are impartial third-party professionals.
- Facilitators do not advocate on behalf of the district.
- Facilitators do not advocate on behalf of the parent.
- Facilitation is not an adversarial process or approach, but one to enhance communication.
- Facilitation (and acceptance of) is voluntary.
- The Facilitated IEP Coordinator determines, on behalf of the South Carolina Department of Education, whether FIEP requests are able to move forward, even once both parties grant permission.
- Facilitated IEP team meetings are an informal dispute resolution option. Because facilitators are impartial, it would behoove all parties to remember that facilitators should not be contacted by districts or parents/adult students following the conclusion of the FIEP regarding the previously discussed issue(s), student, or meeting.
- The Facilitated IEP Coordinator does not accept requests regarding the assignment of facilitators, nor will the listing of state facilitators be released.

For more information, contact the Facilitated IEP Coordinator, Dr. L. Lannette Cox at 803-734-2833 or [Lcox@ed.sc.gov](mailto:Lcox@ed.sc.gov).