

>> All right, everybody, we'll get going. We have 1 hour and I have a lot to share with you about what's happening in Colorado and what we're doing in terms of IEP facilitation. Hopefully you can gain something to snatch. All of our resources are free. Please feel free to go to our website, as well. I'll show you that in the end, and send any questions that you have to me. And in terms of how we're going to chat today, if you have a burning question, please put it in the chat. I will try to answer things as we go on. I'm a firm believer in getting things answered in the heat of the moment, just like in IEP meetings where you don't want to wait until the end. So I don't have a parking lot. I have a chatbox, and we'll get to those as much as we can and we'll go from there. I'm Mary Anne Fleury, and I am the alternative dispute resolution specialist for the Colorado Department of Education. My previous stint in my career was a Director of Special Education for 7 years in a local school district and prior to that, I was a special ed teacher. I ran my own nonprofit in the '90s and was an advocate at that time. And I'm also a parent of a twice-exceptional adult, so sat on the side of the table as the parent [Indistinct] years ago. And so, this is really my passion, all of this work, and thinking outside the box is really what it's all about in our work. I really want to thank CADRE for putting on their symposium. I know it's been difficult during COVID, but I want to thank them for doing this and bringing all of us together in this manner. CADRE is my go-to organization for appropriate ADR work and all of the alternatives and prevention work that we do. So let's get rolling and I'll tell you about what we're doing. In Colorado, we developed a mission years ago to provide funded ... It was built to provide funded toolboxes to all stakeholders in special education, and when I say toolbox I mean a lot of the visual tools that you'll see today, a lot of the strategies and skills we train on, but what we found is that there's so much conflict in special education, and what happens is, is the student is the one that suffers, through all of it and our focus is taken off the needs of the student, and so we had to do something. We had more state complaints coming in, relating to meaningful participation and IEP compliance and so we had to do something. I started in this position in 2017 because the Colorado Department of Ed actually determined there was a need for a board. And so we have an Alternative Dispute Resolution Advisory Board. And the board developed this mission statement and then also said, "We need a position to move this work forward," and I'll tell you a little bit about what we do, but our focus is on collaboration and not legal processes. So while I am on the dispute resolution team, well, I'm on the team that houses the dispute resolution team, so I am on the general supervision and monitoring team along with dispute resolution. However, I don't sit directly in with dispute resolution and that's intentional, to keep the work separate so our work on prevention of disputes is not intertwined with decisions in terms of state complaints. And so our challenges as we all know are huge in special ed, and most of our challenges center on the development of the IEP, and I don't know how many of you would agree with that. Give me a thumbs-up if you would agree. All right. Good, I see a couple hands, thumbs. All right. Good. Thank you. Thank you for being as interactive as you can because this is what it's all about, right? We also know that there's a natural imbalance of power that exists in the process, so we have one parent, maybe two parents, maybe they have an advocate in the meeting. We've got maybe 10 folks on the side of the school, and the parents often feel very undervalued. They report that they're not able to

meaningfully participate, which is a requirement in the law, but they're not able to because they don't understand the process. It's an emotional situation. They're not able to use the frontal lobes of their brains in an emotional situation. And so that's why we've worked really hard to provide visuals to help folks use their frontal lobes. We also know that when we are in the middle of conflict and when we are heavily engaged in disagreements that we don't focus on anything but that disagreement. We walk into the meetings and think about what the parent is going to say, what the school team is going to say. And as a director, I often heavily focused on parents and what the requests would be, what would be my response and then I would forget what? The needs of the student, which is first and foremost why we're there. We also know we're spending a ton of money, and so all of this is what drove the ... I think my chat is in the box. Sorry about that. All of this is what drove our work in alternative dispute resolution and IEP facilitation. And so what we do is we focus on prevention. Everything is prevention-based. We have a board, as I mentioned. Last year we started Coffee Chats with parent liaisons and school districts, with directors of special education to find out what's working, what's not working. We have trainings. Initially Pingora, who you all may be familiar with, supported us in the development of our curriculum in our trainings, so we have what's called Improving IEP Teams: Skills For Resolving Conflict trainings, which are centered on facilitative skills, and some of the tools I'm going to show you today are from that training. And then we also have trainings for folks in the districts and across the state to become neutral facilitators. Often we know we can have all the facilitative skills in the world, but if we work for a district, if we are part of an IEP team, we are not viewed as neutral. So sometimes it's important to bring in a neutral facilitator. Back in 2017, when I started, I went around and interviewed everybody on the board and the board kept saying, "We need neutral facilitators across the state." So I turned around, and I wrote a proposal to hire four part-time folks to be facilitators. The very next day, it was approved by the Department of Ed, and I about fell over, because I thought, "Nothing goes through that fast," and I was so excited to be working for the Department of Ed, thinking everything would go through so fast from then forward, and of course, that was the only thing that went through fast. However, it showed the commitment of the Department of Ed to this work and the need to move forward with it. So we hired four facilitators and changed a little bit over the years. But they are very active, and when COVID hit, oh, we didn't know what to do, and then we were able to shift to telefacilitation and I'll tell you about that as well. We have specific district requests now for training. We give our own and then we all go out and train in the districts. Did a whole lot through virtual training in the last year and a half, and now I'm starting to go out into the districts again. I'm very excited to share that just this morning I was out in one of our larger school districts training general education principles, and I was asked to go down and do that and I was thrilled because we often are not included in a lot of the general education trainings, and so this was very exciting because this is our goal, to move into that this year. We also have training for parent groups, and we collaborate very heavily with our parent training and information center, Parent Center, which is based out of Colorado Springs but they support the whole state. So we have that connection there with our Parent Training Information Center to really reach the parents. They are revamping their website so that parents understand processes, skills, tools, and we often present together at conferences and in our own trainings as well. One of the other things we do to support folks in the field is we have office hours every Tuesday from 3 to 5. Anybody can jump on and say, "Hey, I got this situation," or, "How do I use this skill? How do I use this tool in this situation?" And then this year we're branching out to

provide more coaching to districts as needed on individual topics. So how many of you know what facilitation is? Of course you do, right? So if you're still listening to me, and you haven't tuned out, give me a thumbs-up if you know about IEP facilitation and ... Okay, cool. Cool. I see it. Yay! Okay, so everybody is pretty familiar with it. How many of you ... Okay, put your hands down. And now I'm going to ask you to put your hands up again if you actually have IEP facilitation in your state. All right! All right! Excellent. Good. Well, some of your states may be who I researched when I started, because I really wanted to develop a good program that supported parents and school teams in this work because it's hard. So if you know all about facilitation, it's like herding cats sometimes, right? If you don't have the right tools and skills in place, then the cats scatter everywhere and we never get them together. But what it is ... and we have switched and I have another slide that talks about our shift from the label of IEP facilitation to special education facilitation, and I'll tell you why. Ours is an option for using a third-party facilitator to promote effective communication in our meetings. It's voluntary, so if a district calls or puts in a request online that says they want a facilitator, and the parent says, "Nope, I don't want a facilitator," and we explain what it is and we send out a brochure to explain it as well, then we don't facilitate. However, our facilitations have totally increased. Two years ago we had 93 requests in a year and then during COVID we had about 75 requests. This year we're up to 70 at this point and so we're starting to swing back up even still ... I don't want to say post-pandemic because we're still in the pandemic, but people are really valuing the facilitation supports and services. We want to make sure that everyone has a voice and that's what it's all about. We encourage active participation. We use active listening skills and then it's all collaborative and solution-focused. We know that it's a promising best practice, so those of you who are using it in your states, your information has gone into this research about the best practice of facilitation. In Colorado here again we promote the communication. We assist an IEP team in developing the IEP but we keep the team focused. And we use agendas and other ... And I've got a great tool I want to share with you in a little bit. That includes everybody on the IEP team, of course. One of the things we've struggled with in Colorado though is that there are members of the IEP team and then other people who join in addition so outside folks, either attorneys, advocates, and it's been kind of a journey in really making clear who are the IEP team members. Who makes the decisions? Outside folks definitely support parents or the districts in making decisions, but they're not the ones making the decisions, and so we've had to clarify that in a number of situations. So I mentioned our name changed from IEP Facilitation to Special Education Facilitation. Why? And that is because our facilitators support more than just IEP meetings. We found that teams need help in meetings prior to the IEP, kind of that pre-facilitative work, where you bring the team together to develop a certain plan for an evaluation, for a discussion to talk about concerns that are outside of the IEP meeting. And this is why our numbers have increased is because we provide that support for more than just IEP meetings. Districts and families then were not always requesting for other meetings. Kind of said we were available, but it wasn't really clear, and so they weren't taking advantage of the service so we said, "Hey, let's change the name from IEP Facilitation to Special Education Facilitation," and sure enough, that helped. My child is in special ed. I can access this facilitator to support a meeting outside of the IEP meeting. And so this really supported that idea of conflict, the prevention of conflict, and it kept conflict from escalating because, as we know, by the time we get into the IEP meeting it's often, woo, way far blown. And sometimes facilitation doesn't work at that point and so we wanted to hit it early on. Here's a little snapshot of what we in Colorado have from fall of '17 to

now. We have trained over 800 folks on Improving IEP Teams: Skills for Resolving Conflict. Over 175 folks have been trained as neutral facilitators. Now we only have four that are employed through the state, but 175 across the state have been trained in districts, and districts access people in their regions to support their meetings. However, when it becomes much more contentious, then they often call us in. We teach the skills at conferences, shortened trainings, across the state. And after every training we send out an evaluation and ask what worked, what didn't, what skills are you going to use? And then we continually ask for feedback on that. We also ask for feedback after each facilitation. We have a little QR codes on business cards. We have links where everybody who attended that IEP meeting can go in and say whether or not they felt respected in the meeting, whether or not their voice was heard, whether or not the meeting was completed, and so we have a lot of outcome questions as well. But 99.5 percent in trainings, people in trainings, have said that the training has helped their day-to-day IEP meetings, with the visual tools as very valuable. And we can never express the use of visuals enough. Terms of facilitation since 2017, we've had 307 requests, and about 10 of those were not facilitated but most of them were. Now in terms of meetings many of those have gone on to multiple meetings, maybe two or three meetings and we're trying to narrow down the meetings to hopefully one or two meetings. But in the beginning, some of our meetings went on and on and on, and then we felt facilitation wasn't as effective. So we've tweaked a lot of our processes along the way based on our evaluations. One of the questions on our evaluation from facilitations is centered around whether or not parents feel that they will move forward with other dispute resolution options such as mediation, filing a state complaint, or filing for due process. And 82 percent of our respondents said the process, the facilitation process, has reduced the likelihood that they will move forward with other processes, so it is as I mentioned earlier, a definite best practice. Facilitation versus mediation, and this is probably standard information for all of you, terms of facilitation. It's ... We know it's not in the law, but we know it's forward-focusing and that is our goal is, is, yes, there are things that happened in the past, but we've got to move forward in order for the child to receive FAPE, and so I'm just going to ... Whoop! So we know it's not ... Hang on . I'm skipping too far ahead. We know it's not a legal process. It's not an advocate representing one side or another, and we still receive calls from parents saying, "I want an advocate." And I'll have to say, "Well, we don't provide advocates, but we do provide facilitators and this is what they can do in the meeting." It's not mediation, due process, or somebody saying somebody won or lost, or, "The district has to do this." This is the purpose of facilitation in our state and probably in yours as well. I would love to hear your thoughts on this as well, but our facilitators really are there to keep the communication lines open and to ensure that everybody has a voice. We use those active listening skills, and we reframe, we paraphrase, we mirror. We do all of these skills in order for understanding . And as we know that most of the conflict, I believe and probably you too ... Please give me a thumbs-up if you believe this ... Most of the conflict out there centers around communication, either a lack of communication, which then leads to a lack of understanding and leads to a lack of understanding of data and all of that. So the communication is huge, and back in my advocacy days almost every case that came my way was centered around communication. And so the facilitator can really support that, assist everybody in understanding the information that's shared, help resolve those conflicts, and bring people to consensus, and I'm going to show you one of the tools that we use for bringing people to consensus. Of course we have agendas, and we keep everybody on task and on time for the most part. Ninety percent of the time it works. But we know that we can't use the same thinking we

used years ago when when all these processes started. So we know facilitative skills are a solution, are the best solution right now, and we know that everybody using facilitative skills is helpful not just every day, not just at every IEP meeting, but at every meeting prior to the IEP meeting, after the IEP meeting, but really before disagreements become disputes. Here are all the benefits that we found, and one of the biggest benefit to the teams in my state, and probably yours as well, if you are using facilitation, facilitators, is that parties get to decide. When things move forward into mediation, state complaints, especially due process, nobody gets a say other than the deciding folks who are not members of the IEP team. But we know that once it goes to court then the decisions made by a judge, mediators, can support the team making decisions, but mediators are often not in IEP meetings. State complaints officers are not in IEP meetings and make decisions outside of the meeting as to what the team needs to do if the district is at fault. And with facilitation, everybody in the IEP meeting, every IEP team member including parents can make decisions, and so the decisions are still in the hands of the team, which is where they should be, which is what the law was designed to do. And then we know all of these other things are in place too. The relationships continues dealing with feelings, outcomes are durable, and guess what? It's free! To use facilitative skills is free. It doesn't cost a dime. And I don't know what the costs are in your states, but when I was a director, I paid a minimum of \$20,000 for a mediation, more than that for a state complaint, and luckily in 7 years I never had a lawsuit. I never had anybody go to due process. So we know that these are the benefits, and we really hope that everybody will look to that. What we do then, in Colorado, is we want everybody across the state to have skills. So we push the training, the 1-day training to give everybody skills and tools to run effective IEP meetings. And then if things aren't working, we want them to look to somebody who's trained in their region, their district or a neighboring district to come in and facilitate. Sometimes that doesn't work very well. For instance, when I was a director another director asked me to come in and facilitate, and I was not viewed as neutral, because the parent knew that that director called me in, and while I went in and didn't know anything about the situation ahead of time and in fact, I was very neutral, I was not viewed as neutral, and we know that perception is reality. And so that's why we look to our facilitation evaluations very heavily in determining what to do next because we have to focus on the perceptions folks have. And then, as I mentioned, we have the option of the impartial statewide facilitator as well, so those are all free options for folks in Colorado when things are not going well. Colorado you may know is mostly rural. Yeah, we got the front range, we got Denver, we got Colorado Springs, and there's some towns along there too, but outside of I-25, there's a lot of rural areas. And rural folks were really struggling even pre-COVID to get everybody at the table, and what do we do? Well, guess what? Our facilitators, they got in their cars, and they went all across the state. And we went all across the state and trained on facilitative skills. The challenges, though, are traveling when there's weather involved. You can see our beautiful trees, the mountains. Getting across passes in the middle of the winter, it can be pretty difficult, so pre-COVID, it was kind of tough and then IEP team members we know traveling from one school to another often miss meetings due to distance and weather issues. And what does that do? That can stir the conflict even further because not everybody is at the table who needs to be at the table, so during COVID, we kind of went, "Uh-oh, what do we do? Is this going to shut down our program? We don't know." Nobody was really in school. However, meetings started happening online and so in April 2020 we started ... We had our very first telefacilitation, and the district started moving to virtual IEP meetings. We encouraged them to bring in facilitators for their virtual

meetings. We found, wow, our facilitators could support multiple meetings in 1 day. You don't have to be driving down to Durango 8 hours away and getting back up to Fort Collins in the same day. We could never do it. But through virtual facilitation we could. And they could be all over the state in the same day. Team members who are supposed to be at IEP meetings could then attend the virtual IEP meetings as well. Our parents' attendance increased in virtual meetings, which we were blown away. It was like, wow, even though connection issues were there, even though sometimes they didn't have access, we tried to get them access, and the districts definitely reached out and brought parents into areas where they could access the meetings and they saw much higher increase in attendance. We developed some telefacilitation guidelines after those first meetings because we're like, whoa. When people are sharing their screens sometimes you can't see faces, and so there were a lot of things that we had to adjust. But what we learned during COVID is that participation in an IEP meeting doesn't always have to be in person. And how many of you have found that, too? I'm sure all of you have found that, right? That many folks can now participate. I have a question for you. How many of you, in your states are actually still holding virtual IEP meetings? Okay, quite a few of you. Have a lot of you gone back to in-person meetings as well? Okay. Cool. So we know though that visuals are just as important in virtual meetings as they are in person. And there's many different ways to participate. It's so weird to me though that here we are in 2021 and we've had technology for how many years and nobody ever thought of holding ... maybe some people had some virtual meetings, but in Colorado we really didn't have hardly any virtual meetings. We maybe included some parents on the phone if they couldn't attend, but it wasn't a go-to if we couldn't get everybody there in person. And now all of a sudden we realized, wow, we can bring people in and do this. It is important again ...

>> [Indistinct]

>> Oh, Diana?

>> Yeah, I just want to pause you. I thought one of the participants had actually raised a hand, not in response to the polling, but had a question ...

>> Oh!

>> So I just want to make sure. I'm not 100 percent sure.

>> Good. Okay, thank you. And I see, Kathleen, is that you? Do you have a question?

>> No, I didn't. I just forgot to lower my hand.

>> Okay, that's great. No worries.

>> Thank you.

>> Sure. So one of the things our rural areas started purchasing is what you see in the picture. It's called an Owl. It actually shoots around the room at people who are talking. And it is so slick. And it works really well in our rural areas, and so that way they were able to get folks in, participate more, and the facilitators could then see everybody a lot better and pay attention to the body language and facial expressions, and then they were able to ask more questions. Some of the other lessons learned is, we need to start creating checkpoints to summarize and discuss notes on charts. And then we send copies of our charting because facilitators would be charting, and sometimes it's a little difficult, the more people you have in a meeting, to see what's going on behind the facilitator. If they're charting, then they would talk about what they were writing, and then they would send the copies of the charts. Hybrid facilitation, we found, worked well. We were like, "Uh-oh, some of the people are in person. Some of the people are online. How is this going to work?" And so the facilitators, sometimes they would go into a physical meeting. Sometimes they'd be virtual, and the meeting would still be hybrid, and it actually worked way better than we expected. We did find that everybody needs to have a phone ready to connect if the Internet loses connection and that often virtual IEPs are better for those rural districts. So, moving forward, we're going to continue, and we are continuing to offer virtual facilitations even as meetings are moving into in-person. We are supporting in-person meetings. And then many districts have expressed the need to continue those virtual IEP meetings. We also have offered hybrid options, and that's, as I mentioned before, worked really well. So the critical component is training. We have ongoing support, customized trainings, as I mentioned, the office hours in collaboration with our parent training and information center. So now I'm getting into the very exciting piece, and what makes me very excited to do this work is to provide those visual tools to team members. It is absolutely critical that visuals are presented. I sat in a virtual IEP meeting not too long ago, and everything was verbal, and I could watch the parent just struggling and becoming more and more concerned and upset, and at one point, then, she did yell because she didn't understand. And online, it is difficult, even more so, but in person we still need the visuals. All of us, we use our calendars. We check everything on a regular basis. We are visual people. We live and breathe that way, and our parents do, too. So the tools used in facilitation are really not optional. They really need to be there. It's very interesting. I don't know how many of you have this situation in your states, but every time I train, I ask folks, "How many of you use an agenda in your meeting?" and 10 percent will raise their hand. And I asked principals this morning, "How many of your teams use agendas in their meeting?" Two folks out of ... There were 21 in the room and another 10 on virtual, that were virtual, and two folks raised their hands. And I'm like, "Why?" It is one of the most simplest tools that we call implement to support understanding, to support that calmness in a meeting. I know for me, if I'm in a meeting, I want to know what's happening. When am I going to be done? And we did the same thing for kids. We answered those questions. What work? How much work? When am I finished? And what next? And an agenda can do that, so some of the tools that we use here, I'll walk you through. These are all in that Google folder. Thank you, Edna. Edna says, "I will not facilitate without visuals, and Constance, the Owl, is amazing." I'm glad that you've been able to experience that, as well, depending on parent preference. Good, Shannon. Thank you. Some are hybrid. Awesome, good, thank you for your feedback on all of that. All right. Here we go. One of the things we found is that parents often feel that they do not have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in meetings. And teams will say, "Well, that's interesting because the parent was there. The parent nodded their head, and the parent seemed to participate.

We asked questions. The parent responded, "and parents will call us and say, "I didn't have an opportunity to respond," and again, it goes back to that emotional setting. So give me a thumbs-up. How many of you are parents? Okay, quite a few of you. And how many of you have parents or had parents in special education? See some hands going up. All right. When you're in your own child's meeting, how do you feel? Do you feel kind of stressed out? It's a personal situation, right? Overwhelmed, I see, Shanta, very emotional, yep, and when you're emotional, are you able to really think clearly? I'm not. And as I mentioned, as a parent, on that side of the table, it was very emotional for me. I cried at every single one of my son's meetings even though he was doing really well, but it was personal, and I did not feel like an effective team member. I couldn't make decisions. So one of the things we've found that is helpful is giving parents a tool to use outside of the meeting prior to a meeting to get information from them to bring to the meeting, send to the team ahead of time. And it's all around, what are their student's strengths? What's the behavioral performance observed at home? What's the social interaction look like? And what concerns do you have for your student? What concerns does your student have about school? And any areas that your child needs assistance in, and so we use a form like this, and it's a very standard form. It can be tweaked and changed, and teams take it and change it. Parents have taken it and used it to get ready for their meetings. And what we've found is that parents can complete this in their kitchen while they're drinking their coffee, when it's not an emotional setting, when it's not a contentious meeting that they are in, and they can put all of their thoughts down. And then what they do is, they bring it to the meeting and they have their report just like every other team member. And when it is stressful for them, they can look down at their report, at their information, and they can share it. This information, of course, can be added to the IEP and the area of parent concerns or other information at the present levels form. And parents have stated that this has helped them meaningfully participate, and that's the goal, is to get that meaningful participation so that we are really looking at the true needs of the child, and we come up with an appropriate plan. So do any of you use a form like this in your state, in your districts? Do you send something out to parents ahead of time and get information? And then, do they have the opportunity to report out just like the psychologist or speech therapist? So, Hannah, they are in the Google link and ... Oh, okay. Thank you, Diana. She'll post the link to the Google doc, which has all of this information. Does anybody do anything like this? Can I see a thumbs-up or hands? Sure, you're welcome. Oh, Patty, good, glad to see. Patty, where are you from?

>> Hi, I'm in Santa Barbara, California and we're a family resource center. And so even if some of the districts aren't adopting or using some of these types of tools, we're working with families to help facilitate and encourage the use, and going in and supporting the family and being prepared for what's going to come up is really key.

>> It is key, and it really helps, and it will lessen calls from parents saying that, "I didn't understand. I wasn't able to participate," right? Thank you for sharing that. I appreciate that. So we found this to be a very helpful tool. We've handed this out at our parents' encouraging parents conference that our department of ed puts on for parents. And parents have said that this was so helpful. You can translate this. You can read it to a parent if they cannot read. It can be completed for a parent and referred to in a meeting, but all-in-all, it supports that meaningful participation. In the folder, as well, we have something called an agenda development form. In the beginning, we used to send something like this out to parents, and it was way overwhelming, and so we tweaked it, and we asked parents, when a facilitator comes in, what do they hope to gain? What are their concerns? And what's the purpose of the meeting? Believe it or not, parents often do not know the purpose of the meeting even though the notice of meeting went out and said that. Again, it's an emotional meeting. They're not always connecting with what's going on, and so the more we can support that understanding, the more we can prevent disputes. So we have this that supports an effective agenda, but this, this is the be-all, end-all for IEP meetings. This shows the process. It can be an agenda, and it can be a very effective tool for helping people move through the process with fidelity. So let me explain how we use this in meetings. Let's say a parent comes into a meeting and says, and you may have heard this often, "I want to talk about speech language services immediately," right? At the very beginning of the meeting, "I want my child to have additional hours per week, and I want to talk about it now." We know that if a parent has something on their mind, if anybody has something on their mind in the IEP meeting, and they do not get their question answered immediately or in a reasonable amount of time, that they will fixate on that. And then will they be able to meaningfully participate when we present evaluation data or talk about present levels and needs or goals? No, they are only fixated on, "I need to make sure that I get those additional speech language hours." And so how we have used this is, we have large laminated ones and actually in your Google folder, there is an enlarged FAPE continuum that you can print out and laminate and use in meetings. And then what we do is, as questions or concerns come up, we plug them into the section of the meeting where they belong. And so if a parent is asking about speech language services, we might say, "Thank you very much. That is really important, and we are going to talk about that. First, we need to talk about any new data that we have to see where Johnny is functioning. Where is he at in terms of needs? And then we're going to write some goals, which then drive those services, but we really can't talk about services until" ... You're right. You're right, Debra. LRE, least restrictive environment, should be spelled out. Thank you. And then we can talk about services in the least restrictive environment and the accommodations and modifications. And so what we do is we add a little sticky note to the area so that we do not forget to address it when we get to the services section, so then we can ensure parent or whoever wants to talk about that, that we will get to that at that point in time. What this has also shown parents is the process, so in an IEP meeting, this is what we address, and it also helps other team members. For instance, when I was in school district, I had one of the related service providers, would often jump back to the evaluation information when we were already on goals and want to rehash all of that information. So it's very helpful, then, to say, "Thank you. We definitely captured all of that information here, and right now we're on the goals, so let's focus on the goals." It is a very forward-moving process to ultimately ensure educational benefit. So looking at this, can you tell me if this would be an effective tool in your state and for your IEP meetings? And give me your thoughts on this. Okay, I see a hand. Any thoughts on this? Yes, thank you. Southeast, SELPA, thank you.

>> Yeah, so if anybody feels like unmuting and sharing some thoughts, I think you have the ability to do that, so feel free to do so.

>> Thank you, Diana.

>> So it also helps the school district not to predetermine the placement or the results of the meeting.

>> Yes, Constance, it does.

>> I really like it. Thank you.

>> We can't make the decisions until we get to that point, right?

>> Right.

>> So school districts may often want to place a child in a more restrictive environment, and maybe they might have people from that school attend the meeting, and really you can't make that decision until you get to that point, right? Okay. All right. Let's see.

>> I think it's a good way of helping the parents also to understand better what's going on, the different parts of the IEP process that are using these tools.

>> Yes.

>> So I think it's also a good way of organizing the meeting, but I think it's really good for parents in helping them to understand that process ...

>> Yes.

>> ... and what takes place in an IEP meeting.

>> Yes, thank you, Edna. And, Rhonda, you've made a similar flow chart to help parents when you prep them for meetings, excellent. Doreen says, "It depends on the purpose of the meeting, but it would be helpful in most meetings." And what you can do with this, you can actually change the words in there to show the process of whatever meeting you're having, so you don't necessarily have to have an evaluation or present levels if it's not an IEP meeting. Also, if it is just an evaluation meeting, you can show the next steps, and you can just draw a line. Our facilitators will draw a line as to where they're going to stop after an evaluation meeting and show that then the next steps would be to write the IEP and go on further from there depending on eligibility. So ... All right. So that's one of the tools. That's our favorite tool. This is another tool that we use to help understand the comprehensive evaluation process. So we know that a child is not just one piece of the pie. We know that a child is much more involved and has needs in maybe multiple areas. Maybe there aren't needs in certain areas, but the discussion is what's really important. When I show this to educators, sometimes they go, "No, no. You're telling us to evaluate in every area?" It's like, "Nope, nope. I'm telling you to have a conversation so that you can use informal data to talk about physical or motor skills." If Johnny is moving between the classroom and the playground and can write fairly well, then you don't need to conduct a full physical or motor eval, but you want to make sure that you address all areas, and I found this out the hard way years ago. I went into a meeting where the team was about to label a child with a specific learning disability in reading, and I noticed there wasn't any vision or hearing information. I asked the question, if we had that information, and they said, "No, no. He came after the school year started, missed all the screenings," and so I said, "Let's stop. Let's go back and get that information, conduct the assessments." We came back to the table a couple of weeks later and, lo and behold, the little guy had a visual impairment. He did not have a reading disability. He had a visual impairment, was sitting in the back of the classroom, couldn't see the board and looked very much like he had ADHD. And so if we wouldn't have gone back, think about what you do for a child with a visual impairment versus what you do for a child with a reading disability: totally different. Okay, thank you so much, Diana, for keeping me on target. So here is another tool that we use to ensure we address all areas. I'm going to keep moving. This is a scale that we've also used in our meetings, consensus scale, to bring people together to find out, where is everybody? If we're really stuck, where are we at, okay? And here is how we use it. So if we're really not able to move forward with proposed solutions, we check the pulse in the room. Now, this doesn't come out at every meeting but only in those meetings that are the most contentious, and if people are in a four-to-five, we're good. We're going to check that off, and we're going to move forward. But if they're in a three, then we might want to use some strategic questions, and we do have a lot of strategic questions that we focus on, open-ended, problem-solving questions to really get to the heart of the matter, so we ask more questions and find out if there's enough information and data on the table. If they're at a one or a two, kind of got to back up, and we really have to ensure our understanding of data and terms, identify where the opposition is stemming from and then use more questioning techniques, and we really need to listen and to find out what's going on if someone is at a one or a two. So this has been another helpful tool to bring people to consensus, and we use the term consensus rather than agreement because you'll be there all day if you're going to try to get everybody in agreement. Yes, Latonia, if you can send me or put your e-mail in the chat, then I will make sure you get that, okay? Okay, Patty, I would love to hear your thoughts on that family-friendly piece on the flow chart. Part of the facilitation, also about the pre-and-postdiscussion, it's

remarkable how infrequently agendas are being used when they are such an effective and easy tool. Yes, I totally agree, especially when the agenda can be developed and discussed with the parent before the meeting, yep, and sent out ahead of time and tweaked at the beginning of the meeting, right? Just going to show you really quickly some of our telefacilitation techniques that we've used and some pictures of what we've done for telefacilitation. We do use the FAPE continuum, as we call it, and we explain that during a meeting, what FAPE is. And then we set the stage for collaboration within a virtual meeting. We gather input from everybody, develop that agenda, e-mail everybody the agenda and make sure that's appropriate, and then we ask for new information at the meeting and make sure the agenda is appropriate before we move forward. Okay, thank you. Let's see. I want to ... Is consensus majority or all? Actually, it is ... It's not all. What we ask for is when people ... For people to come to consensus, we ask if people can try something for a couple of weeks if it gets really, really sticky and then come back to the table again. Sometimes you have to stop, and you have to schedule another meeting, so then we ask, "So if we've tried this solution for a couple of weeks, would you be okay if we came back and looked at all of the data in a couple of weeks?" and often that can move people forward. We know there's situations in many meetings that you have to stop. You have to regroup and think about how to move forward the next time, and you can't always do it in one meeting. So here's our telefacilitation guidelines. I won't go through all of those because these are probably pretty standard for all for you, camera is on, microphone is muted, all of that, and those are in the Google folder, as well. We use charting, and we use the tools in the virtual environment. We'd be prepared. We stick with the basics, and we push to ensure understanding for all participants. We focus on collaboration in the meeting. One of the things recently somebody said, "What the heck is, 'Assume positive intent'?" and I think we all know than when we assume positive intent, that we assume that nobody is in the meeting to derail somebody else or because they're not there to support the child or the family, that we are there to listen and respect everybody in that meeting. I won't read all of this. This is in your PowerPoint, but I wanted to include some of our evaluation information on telefacilitations, what we've found was helpful and what we found was least effective. And sometimes things take a little longer. Sometimes it's hard to see everybody in a meeting, and then it's hard to facilitate. But we work according to our evaluations. We tweak as we go. So nothing is really set in stone, and I think that's the key to a good facilitative skills program or facilitation program, is really to be flexible and tweak according to the needs of all and through evaluations. So moving forward in your state, most of you have probably done this already. Engage your stakeholders in either tweaking your program, setting it up and moving forward. Provide those visual tools, and ask. If you are a parent center, and you're going into IEP meetings, ask the team to provide visual tools. And I know, Patty, you said that you do provide visual tools to help understanding. And I think that also helps other team members understand, as well. James, do you want to ... I saw the highlight around your box. Did you have something you wanted to say? Okay.

>> Could be a technology issue.

>> Yeah. For sure, yeah. So really, adjusting services according to the needs of families, districts, and you have to have evaluations in order to do that, and when you do that, then you're going to meet the needs more, and that's why we've seen such an increase over the years in facilitation requests and why we see such positive results in our evaluations, as well. Wanted to point out our website, which is the Colorado Department of Education. You'll see the web address at the top, and you can see how we ask people to request for a facilitator. There is a link. It's a Smartsheet form. There's the information on telefacilitation, on our board, FAQs on facilitation, trainings and facilitation skills. This will be updated next week if you're interested in seeing what's upcoming. We have a brochure on there, which we're changing to an FAQ page, as things are so much more virtual these days. So I wanted to point that out and ask, do you have any questions? And what thoughts do you have? Loved your comments. Thank you for talking about the LRE and our FAPE continuum. Our facilitators explained that, but it might be nice to spell that out, so thank you for that comment. Anything anybody wants to add or thoughts? Thank you, Clarissa. Thank you, Krista. One other thing. I would love to hear what all of you are doing in your states, and if you've got a set process or procedures, please share that. I would love to connect with all of you to see, what are you doing? And what could we learn, because I am a firm believer in begging, borrowing and stealing, and I encourage you to do that same. Thank you, Shanta. So thank you for being here today to hear about what we're doing in Colorado. I hope some of the things that you've seen are helpful for you and your work, as well. All right, Paris. Will do, thank you.

>> Great. Thank you so much, Marianne, and thank you to everyone for showing up. Yeah, thank you.

>> Thank you, and there is one question. Let's see. Bulare, I'm not sure if I said your name right, "How long are your state facilitator meetings?" Are you talking about the trainings?

>> When you actually have a facilitated IEP meeting, how long do those usually average? How many hours?

>> They average about 2 hours.

>> Oh, okay.

>> There are districts that want facilitators to come in for a 30-minute or 45-minute meeting, and we've steered them away from that because in order to ensure that everybody's voice is heard takes a little more time. And so the average is 2 hours.

>> Oh, okay. So do you stop at 2 hours if the meeting looked like it's going to continue, or is it over with or what?

>> No, whatever time the meeting is scheduled for, the facilitator will let everybody know at the beginning of the meeting the time frame. And if they are not finished towards the end of that time, at the very beginning of the meeting she will say, "I may ask you if we want to stay a little longer to finish if we are not finished or if we need another meeting." She may say, "There are a lot of items on this agenda, and so this may take two meetings. Is everybody okay scheduling another meeting later, or do we want to adjust our agenda today?" And so there's a lot of questions that go into that. But towards the end of the meeting, the facilitator will stop. Let's say maybe there's a couple more agenda items and it's ... There are 15 minutes before the end. She may say, "I see that we have a couple more agenda items that we may not get to in the next 15 minutes. Does everybody want to stay? Somebody have to leave? Do we need to reschedule a meeting?" So it's a little flexible like that. I hope that helps.

>> Well, we're averaging around 3 to 4 hours per facilitated IEP meetings, and the facilitators are great, state facilitators. We're just hoping to cut that time down some.

>> Yeah, and if you want to have a conversation later about that, I can certainly connect up with you.

>> Great, thank you.

>> Just let me know.

>> Okay. All right.

>> Thanks very much, Mary Anne. That's wonderful, wonderful presentation. And there's the contact info for Mary Anne if you'd like to follow up with her.

>> Okay. James, real quickly, I know you had a question. The facilitators actually are all different folks. One is a retired director of special education. One has a law degree by trade, is also a parent. Another is a parent but was a parent liaison in a school district, and another was a special education administrator in another state. So it's kind of all over the board in the past. We've had parents, parent advocates and depends on who's trained and if we have openings and who applies and all of that. I hope that answers your question, James. I know we're at time. So thank you very much for being here, everybody. I appreciate you all attending.