

# PREPARING FOR AN IEP MEETING

A parent-friendly guide to feeling prepared, asking questions, and participating in your child's educational planning.

## From KindMind Pediatric Evaluations

You know your child in ways no single test or classroom observation can capture. You belong at the IEP table, and your questions matter.

## What is an IEP meeting?

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting brings the school team and family together to discuss a student's needs, goals, supports, and special education services. The team reviews what is working, what is difficult, and what should happen next.

## Before the meeting: your preparation checklist

- ☐ Confirm the purpose, date, time, location, and expected attendees.
- ☐ Review the current IEP, progress reports, recent evaluations, and teacher communications.
- ☐ Write down your child's strengths, interests, challenges, and priorities.
- ☐ Choose your top 2-3 concerns so they are not lost in the discussion.
- ☐ Gather examples of what you see at home, at school, or with homework.
- ☐ Ask for any draft documents or data you would like to review ahead of time, if available.
- ☐ Consider whether to invite someone who knows your child and can contribute to the discussion.

## A helpful starting point

Try: "I want us to make a plan that reflects my child's strengths and helps with the areas where they need support."

# YOUR CHILD AT A GLANCE

Use this page to organize your thoughts before you walk into the meeting. You do not need perfect answers.

## Three strengths I want the team to know

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## Areas where my child is having difficulty

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## What is helping right now?

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## My three priorities for this meeting

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**Tip:** Be specific about what a challenge looks like, how often it happens, and how it affects learning, participation, communication, independence, or well-being. A short real-life example can be more useful than a broad label.

# QUESTIONS WORTH ASKING

You can ask for clarification, examples, or a break to process information. You do not have to understand every term right away.

## Understanding progress

- What progress has my child made toward each current goal?
- What data or examples show this progress?
- If a goal is not being met, what will we change?

## Goals, services, and support

- Are the proposed goals meaningful, measurable, and relevant to everyday school life?
- What services, accommodations, or supports will help my child work toward these goals?
- Who will provide the supports, when, and in which settings?
- How will you help my child access learning and participate with peers?

## Communication and follow-through

- How and when will I receive progress updates?
- What should I do if I notice a support is not being provided or is not working?
- When will we revisit the plan if needs change?

### Useful phrases:

"Can you explain that in everyday language?"

"What would that support look like during a typical school day?"

"Can we document my concern and the team's response?"

# YOUR VOICE & NEXT STEPS

## During the meeting

- ☐ Ask for explanations of unfamiliar acronyms or test scores.
- ☐ Share what you see at home and ask how it compares with the school setting.
- ☐ Take notes on decisions, who is responsible, and any follow-up dates.
- ☐ If you disagree, state your concern clearly and ask how the team will address it.

## A few important parent participation rights

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), schools must take steps to allow parents meaningful participation in IEP meetings, including appropriate notice and an opportunity to participate. Parents may invite individuals with knowledge or special expertise about the child, and must receive a copy of the IEP at no cost. Parents also have rights related to reviewing educational records and receiving procedural safeguards. Specific procedures depend on the situation.

## After the meeting

- ☐ Get and review the completed IEP and any follow-up documents.
- ☐ Write down what was decided and what questions remain.
- ☐ Watch for progress updates and communicate if supports are not working.

## Notes / follow-up questions

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## Learn more about your rights

North Carolina DPI (2026) Parent Rights & Responsibilities / Procedural Safeguards: [dpi.nc.gov - parent rights guide](https://dpi.nc.gov/parent-rights-guide)

Federal IDEA regulations: Parent participation (34 CFR 300.322).

This guide provides general educational information and is not a substitute for legal advice or the official procedural safeguards.