

# Parent's Guide: Preparing Your IEP Support Person

*What to share with the person coming to support you at your child's IEP meeting*

## You're Smart to Bring Support!

Having someone with you at your IEP meeting is one of the best decisions you can make. They'll help you stay focused, take notes while you talk, and provide emotional support when things get intense. But to be most helpful, your support person needs to understand your child's situation and what you're hoping to accomplish. This guide will help you prepare them to be your perfect teammate.

## Information to Share With Your Support Person

### About Your Child (Help Them Fall in Love Too!)

Fill this out and share with your support person:

My child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age/Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Disability/Diagnosis: \_\_\_\_\_

What makes my child amazing:

- Their biggest strengths: \_\_\_\_\_
- What they love to do: \_\_\_\_\_
- Their personality (funny, determined, sweet, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_
- How they learn best: \_\_\_\_\_

Current challenges at school:

- Academic struggles: \_\_\_\_\_
- Social/friendship issues: \_\_\_\_\_
- Behavioral concerns: \_\_\_\_\_
- Physical/motor skills: \_\_\_\_\_

Why I chose you as my support person:

- What you bring to this (calm presence, good questions, note-taking skills, etc.):  
\_\_\_\_\_

## What I'm Hoping to Accomplish Today

Share your top 3 priorities so they can help keep you focused:

1. My biggest priority: \_\_\_\_\_ Why this matters: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Second priority: \_\_\_\_\_ Why this matters: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Third priority: \_\_\_\_\_ Why this matters: \_\_\_\_\_

If I get emotional or overwhelmed, please help me remember: \_\_\_\_\_

## What to Tell Them About Their Role

### Script for Explaining Their Job:

*"I'm so grateful you're coming with me. Here's how you can help me most:*

- **Be my emotional anchor** - Your calm presence will help me stay focused
- **Take detailed notes** - I'll be talking and listening, so I need you to capture what's being said
- **Ask clarifying questions** - If something doesn't make sense to you, it probably needs more explanation
- **Help me remember my priorities** - If I get off track, gently remind me of what we discussed
- **Be my second set of ears** - Sometimes you'll catch things I miss
- **Support my decisions** - I'm the parent and the final decision maker, but your backup means everything

*You don't need to argue with anyone or take over the conversation. Just being there and helping me stay organized is huge."*

## Meeting Logistics to Share

### Meeting Details:

- **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Location:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Expected length:** \_\_\_\_\_ (usually 1-3 hours)

**Who will be there:**

- Me (the parent)
- You (my support person)
- [Child's name]'s general education teacher: \_\_\_\_\_
- Special education teacher/case manager: \_\_\_\_\_
- School administrator: \_\_\_\_\_
- Related service providers (speech, OT, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

**What to bring:**

- Notebook and several pens
- This information sheet
- Phone on silent
- Tissues (meetings can get emotional!)
- Water bottle/snacks if it's a long meeting

**Background They Should Know****Current Services My Child Receives:**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**What's Working Well:**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**What's NOT Working:**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Recent Evaluations or Important Events:**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Outside Professionals Working with My Child:**

- \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_

## Concerns I Want to Address

Help me make sure we discuss these issues:

1. Concern: \_\_\_\_\_ What I want to see happen: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Concern: \_\_\_\_\_ What I want to see happen: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Concern: \_\_\_\_\_ What I want to see happen: \_\_\_\_\_

If I forget to bring up: \_\_\_\_\_ Please remind me by saying: \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions I Want to Ask

Help me remember to ask these questions:

About progress:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

About services:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

About goals:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

About next steps:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## What Good Support Looks Like

Great Things for You to Say:

- "Could you explain what that means specifically?"

- "Can you give us an example of that?"
- "How will you measure whether this is working?"
- "[Your name], didn't you want to ask about \_\_\_\_\_?"
- "Could we take a short break to review this information?"

### **Helpful Questions You Can Ask:**

- "What would that look like in [Child's name]'s daily schedule?"
- "How does this compare to other children [Child's name]'s age?"
- "What happens if this approach doesn't work?"
- "When should we expect to see progress?"
- "Are there other options we should consider?"

### **How to Support Me If I Get Emotional:**

- Stay calm yourself - your composure helps me
- Offer tissues or suggest a short break
- Gently redirect focus back to [Child's name]'s needs
- If I'm struggling to speak, ask: "Would you like me to read your question?"
- Remind me: "You're doing great advocating for [Child's name]"

## **Red Flags to Watch For**

### **Alert me if you notice:**

- School staff seem unprepared or don't know my child well
- They're rushing through important decisions
- I'm being pressured to sign something without time to read it
- Services are being reduced without clear explanation
- Goals seem too easy or don't address real problems
- Anyone says "we don't do that here" without offering alternatives

### **If you see these red flags, help me by:**

- Asking questions: "Can you help us understand why...?"
- Suggesting we slow down: "This is a lot of information. Can we review it?"
- Reminding me of my rights: "Don't we have time to think about this?"

## **Note-Taking Guide for You**

### **What to Write Down:**

**Decisions made:**

- What services will [Child's name] receive?
- How often and for how long?
- Where will services happen?

**Goals discussed:**

- What goals are they proposing?
- How will progress be measured?
- What's the timeline for achieving goals?

**Action items:**

- Who is doing what?
- By when?
- How will we follow up?

**Important numbers:**

- Minutes of services per week/month
- Frequency of progress reports
- Testing accommodations

**My questions and their answers:**

- [Keep track of what I asked and what they said]

**Quick Note-Taking Tips:**

- Date your notes at the top
- List who was present
- Use abbreviations: ST = speech therapy, OT = occupational therapy
- Star (\*) really important items
- Don't worry about perfect sentences - capture the key info

## **After the Meeting**

**Help Me Process:**

**Ask me these questions when we're done:**

- "How do you feel about what happened?"
- "Did we accomplish your main priorities?"
- "What surprised you?"
- "What are you most worried about?"
- "What went really well?"

## Review Together:

- Go through your notes with me
- Make sure you captured things correctly
- Help me identify what needs follow-up
- Celebrate what went well in the meeting!

## Next Steps Planning:

- What do I need to do next?
- When should we expect to hear from the school?
- Do I need to schedule any follow-up meetings?
- How can you continue to support me?

## Important Reminders

### About Confidentiality:

*"Please keep everything about [Child's name] and our family private. Don't share details with others unless I specifically ask you to."*

### About Decision Making:

*"I'm the parent, so all final decisions are mine. Your job is to support me, not to make choices about [Child's name]'s education. But your input and observations are incredibly valuable to me."*

### About the School Team:

*"Most school staff genuinely want to help [Child's name] succeed. We're going in as partners, not adversaries. Help me stay collaborative even if I get frustrated."*

## Your Emergency Kit

My cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_ School main office: \_\_\_\_\_ IEP Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

### If you need to step out or have concerns during the meeting:

- Text me quietly
- Ask for a bathroom break
- Suggest we take a few minutes to review information

## Final Words of Gratitude

### What to tell your support person:

*"I can't thank you enough for doing this with me. Having you there means I won't feel alone, and I'll be able to focus on advocating for [Child's name] instead of trying to juggle everything myself. Your presence makes me braver and more confident.*

*You don't need to be perfect or know all the answers. Just being there, taking notes, and helping me stay focused is everything. [Child's name] is lucky to have someone like you caring about their education.*

*Let's do this together!"*

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## Checklist: What to Give Your Support Person

- ☐ This completed information sheet
- ☐ Copy of current IEP (if they want to read it)
- ☐ Any recent evaluations or reports you think are important
- ☐ Your contact information
- ☐ Meeting logistics (time, place, directions)
- ☐ A big thank you for being willing to help!

*Remember: The goal isn't to overwhelm your support person with information, but to give them enough background to be genuinely helpful. Choose what's most important and focus on that.*