



Special Education Tips for Parents

View post: <https://disabilityrightsncc.org/resources/special-education-tips-for-parents/>

When you have concerns about your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), it can be hard to know who to talk to or what to do. If you feel overwhelmed by the IEP process, you are not alone. Special education can be hard to navigate. Fortunately, DRNC's education team has you covered. Here is a list of tips they created for parents.

Things we want parents to know

1. You can appeal an IEP Team Decision.
2. You can call [Exceptional Children's Division of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's](#) (DPI) Dispute Resolution Consultants about **any** special education issue at [\(984\)236-2550](tel:9842362550).
3. You can read the [Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities](#) or [Duke's Parent's Guide](#) to learn more about the responsibilities school districts have to children with disabilities.
4. If you have a request or concern related to your child's education, put it in writing. Consider copying your letter or email to someone in a higher position, such as the Principal or the district's Exceptional Children (EC) Director.
5. Read your [Parents Rights Handbook](#). If you have questions, contact one of the resources listed in the handbook.
6. Prepare for your child's IEP meeting by reviewing the current IEP (if applicable). Make a list of:
 - Information you and your child want to share with the team.
 - Your questions and concerns.
 - Any proposals you want the team to consider.
 - Anyone else you wish to invite to the meeting.

After the meeting, review and keep all documents provided to you.

7. If you are having [trouble negotiating with the school](#) to get your child the special education services they need, a good first step is contacting the district's EC Director and asking them to attend the next IEP meeting. Every district has an EC Director and charters usually have either EC Directors or Deans of Special Education. Often, school level administrators and teachers are not as well-versed in special education law and EC Directors can often help resolve issues. If that doesn't work, you can contact DPI's dispute resolution coordinators at the state level.

- 8.** You can request an IEP meeting or evaluation **at any time**; you don't have to wait for the annual review or 3-year reevaluation meeting. If your child is not making meaningful progress on their IEP goals, you may want to ask for a reevaluation.
- 9.** If you are called to pick your child up from school, make sure to ask the school administrator (usually the principal) for formal suspension paperwork. It is important to have suspension days documented so that you can keep track of how many days your child has been suspended so that you know when the school must complete a [Manifestation Determination Review](#) (MDR) (generally after 10 days of suspension in one school year).
- 10.** You don't have to agree with the IEP Team. If you [don't agree with a decision](#), make sure your disagreement is documented in the Prior Written Notice (PWN) and minutes. This documentation should include any refused services along with the school's reasoning for the refusal in the PWN.
- 11.** You don't need an attorney to file a [state complaint](#) – one way to appeal an IEP Team decision that you disagree with.
- 12.** If someone says something you don't understand (maybe a type of evaluation or some other area where jargon might be used), ask questions. IEP teams need to meet parents' needs so they meaningfully contribute to the process. This includes providing accessible information to parents who are non-native English speakers or who have disabilities.
- 13.** Figure out what related services are offered and what's appropriate for your child. Some examples of related services include speech therapy, physical and occupational therapy, counseling, nursing services, and parent training. Even if your child is already getting that service outside of school, they can also receive it in school.
- 14.** Ask if there is or will be a representative from the local education agency (LEA) at the meeting who can approve decisions the IEP Team makes regarding your child's education needs, especially someone who can approve changes regarding funding.
- 15.** At the beginning of the meeting, ask the school to give you a copy of all the IEP meeting documents (IEP, PWN) before you leave the building. Many LEAs have the ability to fill in these documents during the meeting and should be able to provide you with your own copies at the end. When possible, schools should project IEP documents on a screen during the meeting so everyone in the room can see the changes that are being made.
- 16.** Remember, IEPs are not set in stone and can be changed. If you disagree with a decision in the IEP Team meeting, make sure what you disagree with is documented in the PWN. After the meeting collect information, resources, and seek assistance if necessary. You will be better prepared to make an argument for what your child needs when you request another IEP meeting.

Copyright © 2022 Disability Rights NC. All rights reserved. This document contains general information for educational purposes and should not be construed as legal advice. It is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of the law and may not reflect recent legal developments. If you have specific questions concerning any matter contained in this document or need legal advice, we encourage you to consult with an attorney.

