

IEP Meeting Checklist

What Every Parent Should Bring, Ask, and Watch For

You have more power in that room than you think. This checklist helps you walk into your child's IEP meeting prepared, confident, and ready to advocate. Review it the night before and bring it with you.

Before You Walk In

- Request the meeting agenda in writing at least 5 business days ahead.
- Read your child's current IEP — know what was promised last year.
- Collect recent progress reports, evaluations, and report cards.
- Write down everything you've noticed at home — strengths AND struggles.
- List the specific things you want for your child coming out of this meeting.
- Bring a support person — a trusted friend, advocate, or attorney.
- Request all assessment reports before the meeting so you're not reading them cold.
- Write out your questions — don't rely on memory once you're in the room.
- Know your right to audio-record (give written notice to the district beforehand).

TIP: *You are not a guest at this meeting. You are a full, equal member of the IEP team with the same standing as any teacher or administrator in that room.*

During the Meeting

- Confirm everyone required is present before the meeting starts.
- Take notes on everything — or use your phone to record (with prior notice).
- For each goal: ask what data it's based on and how progress will be measured.
- For each service: ask if the amount is enough and who specifically will deliver it.
- Ask about Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) — is your child with non-disabled peers as much as possible?
- Ask about Extended School Year (ESY) if your child loses skills over breaks.
- If behavior is a concern, ask whether a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is in place.
- If your child is 16+, make sure transition planning is part of the IEP.
- Push back on anything that feels wrong — you don't have to agree on the spot.
- Do NOT sign the IEP at the meeting if you have any doubts or unanswered questions.

TIP: "I'd like to take this home and review it before signing" is a complete sentence. You have the right to review the IEP before committing to it.

After the Meeting

- Read the entire IEP carefully before you sign — every page.
- If you disagree with anything, attach a written Parent Concerns Statement.
- Get a signed copy before you leave — don't wait for them to mail it.
- Mark your calendar: service start dates, progress report dates, annual review date.
- If promised services don't begin on time, follow up in writing immediately.
- Keep every document in one dedicated binder or digital folder.
- If the district denies something without good reason, call an attorney.

Rights Every Parent Should Know

You can request an IEP meeting at any time. You don't have to wait for the annual review.

You can request an Independent Evaluation (IEE). At district expense, if you disagree with their assessment.

You can say no. You are never required to sign an IEP on the spot.

You can file for due process. If the district refuses your child's legally required services.

You can bring a lawyer. To any IEP meeting, at any time, without asking permission.

Got questions after the meeting?

Attorney Phillip Sparks has helped hundreds of California families navigate exactly this situation. If the district isn't giving your child what they're legally owed, we'll help you fight for it. Call us — the consultation is free.

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