

Preparing for an IEP Team Meeting

Who is at the table, which notices exist, what the federal timelines say, what to gather, and what to ask

THIS HANDOUT DESCRIBES A PROCESS, NOT YOUR CHILD'S SITUATION

It does not decide eligibility, placement, or services, and it is not legal, clinical, or educational advice about any individual child. Federal regulations set a floor; your state and district add to it. Verify every timeline against your state education agency's rules and your state's federally funded Parent Center before you rely on it.

WHAT THIS IS A general orientation handout used in the Network's free evening workshops	WHAT IT DESCRIBES The process set out in the IDEA Part B regulations at 34 CFR Part 300
WHAT IT DOES NOT DO Decide eligibility, recommend services or placement, or give legal advice	JURISDICTION Federal regulations only — state and district rules sit on top and may differ
CONTENT REVIEWED September 2027 against the sources listed in Section 10	WHERE TO VERIFY sites.ed.gov/idea · ecfr.gov Title 34 Part 300 · your state education agency
FREE INDIVIDUAL HELP Your state's federally funded Parent Center — see Section 10	WORKSHOP Tuesday evenings, 6:30–8:00 p.m., Rowan Bay branch library, Community Room B

1. WHAT THIS HANDOUT WILL AND WILL NOT DO

It will help you:

- Recognise who the regulations put on the IEP Team, and why each role is there
- Tell the three different notices apart, because families are often handed all three and told they are the same thing
- Know what prior written notice has to contain, so you can tell whether what you received is complete
- Assemble records before the meeting rather than after it
- Write questions that ask for data and dates instead of reassurance
- Leave the meeting knowing what will be put in writing and when

It will not answer:

- Whether your child is eligible for special education — only the group described in §300.306 makes that determination
- What services, goals, accommodations, setting, or placement your child should have
- Whether your school or district has violated a rule
- What diagnosis or condition explains what you are seeing
- What your state's own timelines and procedures are — those live with your state education agency
- Anything a lawyer would answer; the Network does not practise law or represent families

Rowan Bay Family Resource Network is a community organization. It is not a school district, not a state education agency, and not the federally funded Parent Training and Information Center for any state. Every state and territory has at least one federally funded Parent Center, and that center — not this handout — is the place to take a question about your own child. Find yours at parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/.

2. WHO SITS AT THE IEP TEAM TABLE — 34 CFR §300.321

ROLE	WHAT THE REGULATION DESCRIBES	WHY THE ROLE IS THERE	CAN THE MEMBER BE EXCUSED?
The child's parents	§300.321(a)(1) lists the parents of the child as team members	Parents are members of the team, not visitors to it	No — a parent is not a member who can be excused under (e)
Not less than one regular education teacher	§300.321(a)(2), if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment	This is the person who describes the general classroom the child is actually in	Only under the written conditions in §300.321(e)
Not less than one special education teacher, or where appropriate one special education provider	§300.321(a)(3)	Describes specially designed instruction	Only under the written conditions in §300.321(e)
A representative of the public agency	§300.321(a)(4) — qualified to provide or supervise specially designed instruction, knowledgeable about the general education curriculum, and knowledgeable about the availability of agency resources	This is the person who can commit the district's resources in the meeting	Only under the written conditions in §300.321(e)
An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results	§300.321(a)(5) — may be a member already described in (a)(2) through (a)(4) or (a)(6)	Turns test data into what it means for instruction	Only under the written conditions in §300.321(e)
Other individuals with knowledge or special expertise about the child	§300.321(a)(6) — invited at the discretion of the parent or the agency; §300.321(c) says the party who invited them determines whether they have that knowledge or expertise	This is how a parent brings someone who knows the child	Not applicable — these are discretionary invitees
The child with a disability, whenever appropriate	§300.321(a)(7)	Students often supply the information no adult at the table has	Not applicable
The child, for transition purposes	§300.321(b)(1) — the agency must invite the child if a purpose of the meeting is considering postsecondary goals and the transition services needed to reach them under §300.320(b)	Transition planning is about the student's own stated goals	If the child does not attend, §300.321(b)(2) requires other steps to ensure the child's preferences and interests are considered
The Part C service coordinator or other Part C representative	§300.321(f) — for a child previously served under Part C, the invitation to the initial IEP Team meeting must be sent at the parent's request	Carries early-intervention history into the school system	Sent only if the parent asks

Excusal has two forms in §300.321(e). If the member's area is not being modified or discussed, the parent and the agency may agree in writing that attendance is not necessary. If the member's area is being modified or discussed, the parent and agency must consent in writing to the excusal and the member must submit written input to the parent and the team before the meeting. Whether to agree is entirely the parent's decision, and this handout does not advise on it.

3. THREE NOTICES THAT ARE EASY TO CONFUSE

NOTICE	WHAT IT IS FOR	WHEN IT COMES	WHAT IT CONTAINS	REGULATION
Meeting notice or invitation	Tells you a meeting is being held and who will be there	Early enough to ensure that one or both parents have an opportunity to attend; the meeting is scheduled at a mutually agreed on time and place	The purpose, time, and location of the meeting and who will be in attendance, plus notice of the provisions about additional participants and, for transition meetings, about inviting the child	§300.322(a) and (b)
Prior written notice	Tells you what the agency proposes or refuses to do, and why	A reasonable time before the agency proposes or refuses to initiate or change identification, evaluation, educational placement, or the provision of FAPE	Seven content elements, listed in Section 4 of this handout	§300.503(a) and (b)
Procedural safeguards notice	Explains the full set of parental rights under Part B	Once a school year, and also on initial referral or parent request for evaluation, on receipt of the first State complaint and first due process complaint in a school year, on a disciplinary change of placement, and on parent request	A full explanation of the safeguards, including independent educational evaluations, prior written notice, consent, records, mediation, complaints, due process, and discipline procedures	§300.504(a) and (c)
Notice of evaluation procedures	Tells you what the agency proposes to do to evaluate	Before the evaluation, as part of prior written notice	A description of any evaluation procedure the agency proposes to conduct	§300.304(a)
Request for consent	Asks you to agree, in writing, to a specific action	Before an initial evaluation, before the initial provision of services, and before a reevaluation	The activity for which consent is sought, described so that the parent is fully informed	§300.300 and §300.9

The meeting invitation and prior written notice do different jobs. The invitation tells you a meeting is happening. Prior written notice tells you what the agency proposes or refuses to do, and it follows the decision rather than the meeting.

4. PRIOR WRITTEN NOTICE, ELEMENT BY ELEMENT — §300.503(B)

When a public agency proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a child, or the provision of FAPE to the child, §300.503(a) requires written notice to the parents a reasonable time before it acts. Paragraph (b) lists what that notice must include:

1. A description of the action the agency proposes or refuses to take.
2. An explanation of why the agency proposes or refuses to take the action.
3. A description of each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report the agency used as a basis for the proposed or refused action.
4. A statement that the parents of a child with a disability have protection under the procedural safeguards of Part B and, if this notice is not an initial referral for evaluation, the means by which a copy of a description of the procedural safeguards can be obtained.
5. Sources for parents to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of Part B.
6. A description of other options that the IEP Team considered, and the reasons why those options were rejected.
7. A description of other factors that are relevant to the agency's proposal or refusal.

Language requirements — §300.503(c). The notice must be written in language understandable to the general public and provided in the parent's native language or other mode of communication, unless it is clearly not feasible. If the parent's native language or mode of communication is not a written language, the agency must take steps to ensure the notice is translated orally or by other means, that the parent understands it, and that there is written evidence those steps were taken.

If a decision was only spoken. Families are sometimes told a decision in a meeting or on the phone and never receive it in writing. A parent can ask for prior written notice in writing:

1. Write down the date of the meeting or call and the specific decision you were told.
2. State that you are requesting prior written notice for that decision.
3. List the decisions separately, numbered, so nothing is answered in a single vague paragraph.
4. Send it to the special education administrator and keep a dated copy for your file.

Where to read more: The Center for Parent Information and Resources publishes a plain-language explanation and a sample request structure at parentcenterhub.org/notice/, with the underlying rights explained at parentcenterhub.org/notice-prior/.

5. THE FEDERAL TIMELINE — AND EXACTLY WHERE YOUR STATE TAKES OVER

STEP	WHAT THE REGULATION DESCRIBES	FEDERAL TIMEFRAME	SECTION	WHERE YOUR STATE'S RULE MAY DIFFER
Referral or a parent's written request for an initial evaluation	Either a parent or the public agency may initiate a request for an initial evaluation	No federal day count attaches to the request itself	§300.301(b)	Many states set a day count for responding to a parent's written request
Consent for the initial evaluation	The agency must obtain informed parental consent before conducting an initial evaluation	The evaluation clock starts when consent is received	§300.300(a)	States define how consent is documented and what happens if consent is refused
The initial evaluation itself	A full and individual initial evaluation before the initial provision of special education and related services	Within 60 days of receiving parental consent, or within a State-established timeframe if the State has set one; two exceptions appear in §300.301(d)	§300.301(c) and (d)	A State timeframe replaces the 60 days entirely — this is the single most state-dependent number on this page
Eligibility determination	A group of qualified professionals and the parent determine whether the child is a child with a disability and the child's educational needs; the parent gets a copy of the evaluation report and the eligibility documentation	Made on completion of the evaluation	§300.306	States and districts set the local documentation and meeting practice
The initial IEP meeting	A meeting to develop an IEP is conducted after a determination that the child needs special education and related services	Within 30 days of that determination	§300.323(c)(1)	States may require it sooner
Services begin	Services are made available in accordance with the IEP as soon as possible following development of the IEP, and the initial provision of services requires parental consent	No fixed federal day count	§300.323(c)(2) and §300.300(b)	State rules often add a day count here
The IEP is in effect	An IEP must be in effect for each child with a disability at the beginning of each school year	At the start of every school year	§300.323(a)	—
Review of the IEP	The IEP Team reviews the IEP periodically to determine whether annual goals are being achieved, and revises it as appropriate	Not less than annually	§300.324(b)(1)	States may require more frequent review
Reevaluation	A reevaluation is conducted when the agency determines the child's needs warrant one, or when a parent or teacher requests one	Not more than once a year unless the parent and agency agree otherwise, and at least once every 3 years unless the parent and agency agree it is unnecessary	§300.303	States may shorten the outer limit
Access to education records	The agency must let parents inspect and review education records it collects, maintains, or uses	Without unnecessary delay, before any meeting regarding an IEP and before any due process hearing or resolution session, and in no case more than 45 days after the request	§300.613(a)	States may require a faster response

A note on counting days: in Part 300, "day" means calendar day unless the regulation says business day or school day, and §300.11 defines all three. A state rule that says "school days" is not the same length as a federal rule that says "days," and that difference is where most timeline confusion starts.

6. RECORDS: WHAT TO ASK FOR, AND HOW TO ASK

RECORD	WHY FAMILIES ASK FOR IT	WHERE IT USUALLY LIVES	WORDING YOU CAN ADAPT
Every prior written notice you have received	It is the written record of what was proposed or refused and why	Mailed, emailed, or sent home; often filed as a separate form	"Please send copies of all prior written notices issued for my child since [date]."
Current IEP and the two before it	Shows what changed, when, and what the team said it was measuring	Special education office or the case manager	"Please send the current IEP and the two prior IEPs."
All evaluation reports the team relied on	Prior written notice must describe the evaluations used as a basis for a decision, so these are the documents behind the decision	Evaluation file within the education records	"Please send every evaluation report and assessment protocol summary in the education record."
Progress reports on IEP goals	The IEP must state how progress will be measured and when periodic reports will be given	Case manager, often on the school's reporting cycle	"Please send all goal progress reports issued this school year."
Work samples and data sheets	The raw material behind a summary sentence in a report	Classroom and service providers	"Please send the data sheets or work samples behind the progress statements."
Attendance and discipline records	Often relevant to how a question came up in the first place	School office	"Please send attendance and discipline records for this school year."
Meeting invitations and attendance sheets	Establishes who was present, and when notice was given	Special education office	"Please send meeting invitations and signed attendance sheets for the last 12 months."
Your own communication log	The one record you control completely	You keep it	Date, who, how, what was said, what was promised, what you did next

Under §300.613(a) the agency must comply with a request to inspect and review education records without unnecessary delay, before any meeting regarding an IEP, and in no case more than 45 days after the request. Ask in writing and date the request, because the clock runs from it. Separate FERPA rights, including the right to ask that a record be amended, are explained at studentprivacy.ed.gov.

7. THE TWO PAGES TO WRITE BEFORE YOU GO

1. Page one — observations. Dated, concrete, and short. What you saw, on what day, and what happened next. Not conclusions.
2. Page two — questions, ranked. Assume you will get to four of them. Put the four you most need at the top.
3. Decide who is coming with you. §300.321(a)(6) lets a parent invite an individual with knowledge or special expertise about the child.
4. Ask for an interpreter or another mode of communication in advance if you need one, and confirm it in writing.
5. Plan note-taking: one person listens, one person writes. Ask about recording well before the meeting, because recording rules are set by state and district policy, not by the federal regulations.
6. Bring your copies. Arriving with the current IEP, the last prior written notice, and the progress reports changes what the conversation can cover.
7. Decide in advance what you will say if a decision is announced verbally: ask for it in prior written notice.

8. AFTER THE MEETING — A FIVE-DAY CHECKLIST

- ☐ Write your own summary the same evening, while you still remember the order things were said in.
- ☐ Email the district a short, factual note of what you understood was decided, and ask for correction if you have it wrong.
- ☐ Diary the date the prior written notice was promised.
- ☐ When it arrives, read it against the seven elements in Section 4 and note anything missing.
- ☐ Check that the rejected options and the reasons for rejecting them are described.
- ☐ File everything in date order, in one place, including your own summary.
- ☐ If something is unclear, ask one written question at a time rather than a long list.
- ☐ If a promised document has not arrived by the date given, send a one-line written follow-up referencing the meeting date.

9. A QUESTION BANK, ORGANISED BY THE PART OF THE MEETING IT BELONGS TO

PART OF THE MEETING	A QUESTION YOU CAN ASK AS WRITTEN	WHAT TO WRITE DOWN
Evaluation data	Which evaluations, records, or reports were used as the basis for what is being proposed today?	The document names and dates, so you can match them to the prior written notice
Present levels	What data supports each statement about how my child is doing now?	Whether the statement rests on a dated measure or on an impression
Goals and measurement	How will progress toward each goal be measured, and when will I receive periodic reports on that progress?	The measure, the schedule, and who produces the report — §300.320(a)(3) requires the IEP to state both
Delivery	Who will deliver each part of what is proposed, and how will the team know it happened?	Roles and the record that shows delivery
Participation with peers	What is the explanation for the extent, if any, to which my child will not participate with nondisabled children?	The explanation the team gives, in the team's own words
Options considered	What other options did the team consider today, and why were they rejected?	Both parts — prior written notice must describe the rejected options and the reasons
The written notice	What exactly will the prior written notice for this meeting say, and when will it reach me?	The proposed or refused action, and the date the notice will be sent
Effective dates	When does each decision take effect, and what happens between today and then?	Dates, in writing
Disagreement	If I disagree with part of this, what is the process here, and where is that written down?	The procedure the district names, and the section of the safeguards notice it comes from
Next meeting	How do I request another meeting, and to whom does the request go?	A name, a title, and an address or email

These are process questions on purpose. They ask what the data is, what the team considered, and what will be put in writing. Choosing what to request for your own child is a decision for you and, if you want help, for your state's Parent Center — not for a general handout.

10. WHERE EVERY STATEMENT IN THIS HANDOUT COMES FROM

SOURCE	PUBLISHER	WHAT IT COVERS	ADDRESS
IDEA website — statute and regulations	U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs	The full text of IDEA and the Part B regulations, section by section, with the Department's model forms and guidance	sites.ed.gov/idea/
34 CFR §300.321 — IEP Team	U.S. Department of Education	Who the regulation requires on the IEP Team, and the written-agreement and written-input conditions for excusing a member	sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/d/300.321
34 CFR §300.503 — Prior written notice	U.S. Department of Education	When notice is required, the content it must include, and the understandable-language and native-language requirements	sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/e/300.503
34 CFR §300.504 — Procedural safeguards notice	U.S. Department of Education	How often the safeguards notice is given, the events that trigger an extra copy, and everything the notice must explain	sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/e/300.504
34 CFR §300.301 — Initial evaluations	U.S. Department of Education	The 60-day evaluation timeframe, the State-timeframe alternative, and the two exceptions	sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/d/300.301
34 CFR Part 300 — current text	Electronic Code of Federal Regulations	The continuously updated official text of Part 300, useful for checking whether a section has been amended since this edition	ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-III/part-300
Center for Parent Information and Resources	Federally funded technical assistance center for Parent Centers	Plain-language explanations of parental rights, prior written notice, the IEP Team, evaluation, records, and dispute resolution	parentcenterhub.org
Find Your Parent Center	Center for Parent Information and Resources	The directory of federally funded Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers by state	parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/
CADRE	National Center on Dispute Resolution in Special Education	Neutral material on facilitation, mediation, state complaints, and due process, including what each option does and does not do	cadreworks.org
Student Privacy Policy Office	U.S. Department of Education	FERPA rights of access, the right to request amendment of a record, and how those rights sit alongside the IDEA records provisions	studentprivacy.ed.gov

11. BEFORE YOU RELY ON ANYTHING IN THIS HANDOUT

Jurisdiction and currency: Everything described here is the federal floor set by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and its Part B regulations at 34 CFR Part 300. States and territories may set shorter timelines, add steps, and provide procedures that go beyond the federal minimum, and school districts add local forms and routing on top of that. Before you rely on any timeframe in this handout, confirm it against your state education agency's special education rules and your state's Parent Center. Regulations are also amended; check the edition date on this handout against the current text at the sources listed inside.

Scope: This handout is general process orientation. It does not decide whether a child is eligible for special education, does not recommend an evaluation, a placement, a service, a setting, a goal, an accommodation, or a diagnosis, and it is not legal, clinical, medical, or educational advice about any individual child. No part of it creates a right, and no part of it should be quoted to a school as though it were a rule.

Regulation text is summarised, not reproduced. Where this handout paraphrases 34 CFR Part 300, the regulation itself controls, and the version in force when you read this may differ from the version reviewed for this edition. State and territory rules, and local district procedures, may provide additional or shorter timelines and additional procedures; nothing here describes them. This handout is general information and is not legal, clinical, medical, or educational advice, does not create an advocacy or professional relationship, and must not be used to decide eligibility, placement, services, goals, accommodations, or discipline for any individual child. Rowan Bay Family Resource Network, its staff, its addresses, and its workshop details are invented for a demonstration set and describe no real organisation.