

Advocacy Notes



TOPIC: We seem to have so many different meetings that we are asked to attend with the school district. What is the purpose for all of the different special education meetings? What is a Transition meeting?

Special Education Meetings for Necessary Communication

Many families know that they have an IEP meeting once a year. However, the variety of IEP meetings that are held, when they can be held, and who can request an IEP is not always clear to families or teachers. One type of IEP meeting that can be confusing to many families is the Transition IEP, and the confusion is heightened by the fact that some school districts will use the transition IEP to change the Triennial IEP date.

Following are the various types of IEP meetings:

Initial IEP

Annual IEP

Triennial IEP

Amendment IEP which is any IEP meeting held between the annual IEP meetings and can be requested by either the district or the family at any time. One amendment meeting is the Transition IEP.

Transition meetings can be very confusing. IEP teams meet for a variety of transitions throughout the educational process, and these meetings are all typically scheduled in the Spring. Following is a discussion and overview of the various types of transition meetings:

- Transition from preschool to Kindergarten: While compulsory education does not start at preschool, special education placement does. When it comes time to transition from preschool to Kindergarten, the IEP team will schedule the “Kindergarten Transition IEP.” Some school districts do not serve their students during preschool as they may use regionalized special education preschool programs. Therefore districts may do formal/informal observations in the preschool setting and gather data about how the child is doing, while other districts choose to conduct a full re-evaluation and make the Transition to Kindergarten the new triennial IEP meeting. Either way, the full IEP team would be expected to attend along with a general education Kindergarten teacher. The transition meeting is a wonderful way to reduce the stress and anxiety that both the family and the educators in the receiving school may have. It also allows for the district to share the various program options with the family and for the IEP team to identify any additional supports that will be needed. The district can then conduct staff training, order low incidence equipment, and make any necessary acoustic accommodations over the summer.
- Transition from elementary school to middle school (junior high) and from middle school to high school: Elementary school is typically a time when our students have a single classroom teacher who is nurturing, safe, and responsible for teaching all academic subjects. The transition to middle school is stressful for all students as it occurs at the same time as the onset of adolescence. Our students with hearing loss may have even more anxiety as they move from one teacher to potentially 6-7 separate subject matter teachers who all need to understand their unique needs. Depending on mode of communication there will typically be additional staff training, discussion of interpreters, captioning, note-taking, and other unique supports. In the early Spring of the last year of elementary school the IEP team will begin to schedule a Transition IEP meetings which will include the current providers as well as special education representatives from the receiving middle school. This meeting is not a time to review progress on previous goals, develop new

goals, or make a new offer of FAPE. The purpose of this meeting is to share the child's eligibility, explain their unique needs, review the accommodations, and current services with the receiving team. This is when the middle school team will explain their programs and class options which may include a DHH placement, a variety of supported classes for ELA and Math, or a supported Study Skills class. The transition from middle school to high school is basically the same process and an opportunity for the receiving school to explain their programs and class options while the IEP team shares how the student is doing as well as all of their unique needs and support services as a student with hearing loss.

- IEP Transition Planning: The IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) requires that IEP teams begin planning with all students who have an IEP by the time they turn 16. The Individual Transition Plan (ITP) is included in the IEP document. It is typically created with a combination of student interview and interest surveys completed by the student with their IEP case carrier. The purpose of the ITP is to help students prepare to be as independent as possible following high school. The ITP includes planning and goals in the areas of Post-Secondary Education, Post-Secondary Employment, and Independent Living. As with all other portions of the IEP document, the ITP is revisited every year as a part of the annual IEP.
- Transition from high school to adult education (18-22): Unless our students with hearing loss have another eligibility, the goal is that they will graduate from high school after their senior year. There are, however, occasions when students do not complete the high school graduation requirements and are eligible for IEP services until age 22. In these cases, the IEP team at the high school will call a Transition IEP in the Spring of the Sr. Year. The team should include a representative from the adult education program. While students continue to have academic support from age 18-22, much of the focus is on supporting students in accessing the community and independent living.
- Transition out of high school, also known as the Exit IEP: The IEP and Special Education services end for the following reasons: the student no longer meets eligibility requirements, the student graduates from high school, or the student turns 22 years old. Each state decides the level of supports that they have available for individuals with disabilities post-high school. At this time the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) governs supports in college, career training, employment, and independent living. If there is a state agency that supports students with their college education, the IEP should invite a representative of the agency to the Exit IEP to facilitate the transition. I typically ensure that the students and IEP teams with whom I work begin to educate students (via IEP goals) during their junior and senior year regarding their IEP accommodations and the differences between the IDEA and the ADA so that they are knowledgeable and ready to successfully advocate for themselves in all areas of their lives.

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