

Tips and Tricks for Getting Effective IEPs



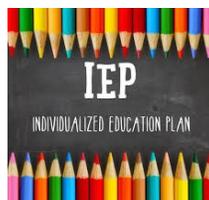
Things I have learned through the years that have helped me get a

program to meet my children's needs.

1. Knowledge is power. I learned as much as I could about the law. I used the internet, library and support groups. There is a wealth of support groups online. Find one right for you. Use your knowledge to even the playing field with the school. **2. Prepare for the IEP meeting.** I always requested a DRAFT version of the IEP, 5 days in advance, so I would have time to read it. I had a professional (physician, neurologist, advocate, attorney) review it as well prior to the IEP meeting. This allowed more time for discussion at the meeting versus wasting time reading the IEP. It also helped me to be ready to discuss items that were well-written or important items that were not included. **3. Request any evaluations the school gave your child.** I always requested a DRAFT copy of all of my child's evaluation results, 5 days in advance, to review with any professionals I deemed necessary.

4. Carefully review the IEP. I always had a rule never to sign the IEP at the meeting until I took it home to look at it "one more time." I have appreciated this rule many times. In every IEP meeting there are always changes based on discussions, information from other teachers, etc. If you try to "write" the IEP during these discussions, you will list information incorrectly or miss information or just plain misunderstand. The school would have everyone sign the IEP and give me a DRAFT version without the last page. Once I was satisfied with the draft, I would return it and sign the last page. Then I would get a final copy of the official IEP to take with me.

5. Create a paper trail. Write request letters and follow-up letters on important issues (i.e., specific items promised, discussed requests for evaluations or follow-up). Document everything. **6. Use expertise from other professionals.** I have requested letters from professionals (math tutors, speech tutors, reading tutors, etc) who knew my children. I asked them to come to the IEP meetings in person on various 1/2 occasions. This adds much professionalism to the meeting. They "speak the same language" as the teachers and get their point across regarding my children better than I can. Be prepared to pay for these people to come in person. It will cost less money than hiring an attorney and is less adversarial. **7. Tape record meetings.** I always bring a good digital tape recorder to the meeting. I let the IEP team know in advance that I am bringing one. The main reason is I don't have to be a note taker versus an active participant. Having the meeting on tape makes it clear what everyone said. I find that people act more professionally and do not make incorrect statements when you record meetings.



8. Make sure your child's teachers have a copy of the IEP.

I go to the school with several copies of my child's IEP on the first day the teachers are with my child. (I always ask permission before I show up.) I have found that many teachers never get a copy of my child's IEP. They are unaware of what supports or modifications/ accommodations my child requires. If my child acts badly when the proper supports are not in place, the teacher gets a bad first impression of my child for the rest of the quarter. Very often the entire year

goes badly after that. I take my child and the IEP. We meet for just a few minutes, discuss informally some items, and leave a copy of the IEP. His teachers are usually grateful to know what is going on and what to expect. It starts the year off much better. If I cannot meet with the teachers for some reason I give the copies to the school secretary at the office and request that a copy be put in each teacher's mailbox with a note attached. Tip: Follow-up with a phone call or email just in case. **9. Maintain a professional image.** Please remember that dealing with the school is a "professional business style relationship," not a friendship. If you are friends in the end that would be a bonus. Many parents are surprised when school personnel do not want to provide certain services or act inappropriately. When I became more knowledgeable about the IEP process and started asserting my child's rights, I often became friends with a teacher. What happened at the IEP meetings stayed in the meetings and teachers never took it out on my children. **10. Don't hesitate to request an IEP review when needed.** The minute things started going wrong (i.e., grades dropped, the IEP was not being followed, supports were not put in place or sporadic, my child telling me there are issues, etc.) I would request an IEP meeting. I sent a letter to the principal or special ed director to request a meeting, explained why, and suggested what dates and times would work. They always responded. We were able to resolve the issues before they got worse. My children were the type that if I allowed anything to continue or fester it would only make things worse. Some parents only think IEP meetings are once a year. You may request an IEP meeting anytime your need to. Nothing is foolproof and nothing is perfect. I just did the best I could for my children.



Island County Parent to Parent

Human Services
Tiffany Wheeler-Thompson
PO Box 5000
Coupeville, WA 98239

(360)632-7539
t.wheeler-thompson@co.island.wa.us



For Up-to-Date information, events and resources, reminders,

Like our Facebook Page
www.facebook.com/islandcountyparent2parent

Fall Sports & Activities

October 4th Resource Transition Fair
Coupeville High School 5:30-7:30pm
Questions/RSVP with Mike Etzell (360)678-7883

Special Olympics - Oak Harbor
Bowling starts in September Basketball starts in December
Call Chris Becker for details (360)320-2549

Special Olympics - South End Basketball starts in December
Call Mike Etzell for details (360)678-7883

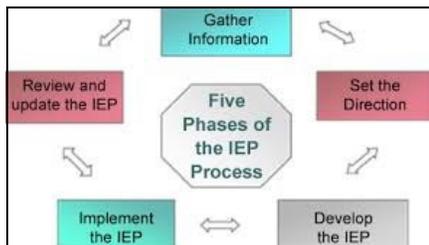
DanceFit for kids ages 4th Grade to 12th Grade
Equipped for Life Fitness in Bayview with Patty Maddux
(425)299-4832

Special Swim for Special People - Oak Harbor Pool
Second Saturday of the month Call to verify times and dates (360)675-7665

Sensory Friendly Films at Cascade Mall Movie Theater
9/10 Kubo & the 2 Strings 9/13 Sully 9/24 Storks
10/11 Gambit 11/12 Trolls 12/9 Moana 12/27 Star Wars
Call to verify times, dates and films. (360)707-2727

IEP Tricks and Tips continued from Page 1.....

I hope that some of these ideas are helpful to you. Sharon Lutz (Sharon L.) of Ohio is a parent of 3 sons with learning disabilities (ADHD and Dyslexia). Sharon is an advocate for her sons and has 25 years of experience working with school districts and the IEP process. Sharon enjoys sharing information with other parents so they can benefit from her experiences and is the author of "If I Can Do It, Anyone Can: A Resource Book for Parents of Learning Disabled Children" and a member of the Learning Disabilities Association of America. Sharon started a parent advocate group. Members shared ideas and strategies and provided information to parents and the community. Copyright © 2016 The Wrightslaw Way All Rights Reserved wrightslaw.com/blog/tips-tricks-for-getting-effective-ieps/



As School Anxiety Begins, The Caregivers May Need Some Support As Well...

South Whidbey Support Group Meets The 2nd Friday of the Month at South Whidbey Elementary Family Resource Room (360)221-6808xt4321

Parent Support Partnership Meets the 2nd Tuesday of the Month at South Whidbey Elementary Family Resource Room (360)221-6808 xt 4321

Friends Helping Friends Meets the 3rd Thursday of the Month at Aptitude Habilitation Services
Jaemee.w@tlcwhidbey.org

PAMI Padres Apoyando Motivando Informando Meets the 1st Tuesday of the Month at Aptitude Habilitation Services pamiespanol@gmail.com

EFMP- Exceptional Family Member Program (NASWI) Sheryl Prout (360)257-5266