



**Utah Parent Center**  
Special needs, extraordinary potential

## **Supporting Parents Information Sheet**

### **Utah Parent Center**

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## **Steps for Success in Supporting Parents through the IEP Process**

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1. Explain to parents the IEP process is designed to be a partnership where everyone works together to meet the needs of the child. The process is outlined in detail in the law, but the purpose is to provide a structure that allows the team process to work to serve the child.
2. Help parents realize the importance of their participation as an equal member of the team in deciding what the goals and services for their child will be. The information they share about their child is very important in helping the team understand their child.
3. Help parents prepare for the IEP meeting by encouraging them to review their child's records. Parents can review files from previous programs that will help them plan more effectively for future programs and needs. If these records are not in the parent's possession, encourage them to obtain copies from the school if necessary. You could encourage parents to prepare a written profile describing their child and bring copies to share with the team. You can also encourage parents to bring a picture of their child.
4. Encourage parents to share copies of any independent professional evaluations they may have.
5. Have parents make a list of the needs that their child has. They may also wish to list any goals or services that they would like to discuss with the team. Make sure parents have a copy of the proposed goals or a draft of the IEP ahead of time. Sharing ahead can help everyone to be more prepared for discussion and negotiation.
6. Remember that the goals and services are based upon the needs of the child. If the parent is able to explain the concerns they have about their child so that all team members understand them, they will have a better opportunity to have them addressed for their child. If the parent has ideas for goals and services, help them make a list and prioritize what is most important. Help them to be able to explain how the goals and services address the needs of their child.
7. Encourage parents to write down any questions that they may have about evaluations or any of the services and make sure they have the opportunity to ask them. Have parents ask for clarification if they do not understand something the team is discussing.
8. Help parents understand and follow the process.
9. Encourage parents to include their child in the process as appropriate. Participating in or leading the team meeting can be very empowering for a student, and can help the student to "buy in" to the goals and the program. It is also important for students to learn to advocate for their needs and interests as early as possible.
10. Coach parents to communicate clearly and directly about their concerns and needs.
11. After the IEP meeting, encourage parents to follow up to see that the agreed upon program and services are being implemented. Ask the parent to monitor the child's progress on the IEP goals.
12. If parents have concerns about their child's special education, work within the system to resolve them. Help them follow the chain of command in the school district and take advantage of the expertise of the professionals in their district.