



Requesting Prior Written Notice

For families and for personal reference

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from the Center for Parent Information and Resources
Available online at: <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/notice/>

*From our series of model letters...because sometimes
you need to communicate with the school
about your child's education.*

There are times when you, as a parent, may want to communicate in writing with your child's school about some problem or concern with your child's education or well-being. This brief presents a model letter or email you might write to request that the school provide you with *prior written notice*.

What is prior written notice, and why would I want it?

There are certain times when the school must put in writing its decisions about your child's education and the reasons for those decisions. This written communication is called ***prior written notice***. You have the right to receive prior written notice whenever the school wants to (or refuses to):

- evaluate your child,
- change your child's disability identification,
- change your child's educational placement, or
- change the way in which your child is provided with a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

The school system is supposed to *automatically* provide you with prior written notice in any of these events. In practice, however, sometimes the school may tell you its decision over the telephone, in a meeting, or in a one-on-one conversation. That is definitely not "written" notice. As a parent, you have the right to receive notice in writing, and you can request that the school system provide it. It's always a good idea for you, as a parent, to put your own request in writing.

For example, you may have asked for an independent educational evaluation (IEE) of your child at public expense. The school system may tell you on the phone that it has denied your request. Obviously, that information is not in writing. So you ask that the school provide this notice to you in writing. The school must then put its decision in writing and explain the reasons for the decision. This information can be helpful if you pursue the IEE through a due process hearing. You will then have in writing the school system's reasons for denying the IEE.

For more detailed information about prior written notice, please refer to *Right to Receive Prior Written Notice*, at: <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/notice-prior/>

General Letter-Writing Tips

When writing any business letter, it is important to keep it short and to the point. First, start by asking yourself the following questions and state the answers in your letter:

- Why am I writing?
- What are my specific concerns?
- What are my questions?
- What would I like the person to do about this situation?
- What sort of response do I want: a letter, a meeting, a phone call, or something else?

Each letter you write should include the following basic information:

- Put the date on your letter.
- Give your child's full name and the name of your child's main teacher or current class placement.
- Say what you want, rather than what you don't want. Keep it simple.
- Give your address and a daytime phone number where you can be reached.
- Always end your letter with a "thank you."

What are some other tips to keep in mind?

You want to make a good impression so that the person reading your letter will understand your request and say "yes." Remember, this person may not know you, your child, or your child's situation. Keep the tone of your letter pleasant and businesslike. Give the facts without letting anger, frustration, blame, or other negative emotions creep in. Some letter-writing tips include:

- After you write your first draft, put the letter aside for a day or two. Then look at it again and revise it with fresh eyes.
- Read your letter as though you are the person receiving it. Is your request clear? Have you included the important facts? Does your letter ramble on and on? Is it likely to offend, or is the tone businesslike?
- Have someone else read your letter for you. Is your reason for writing clear? Can the reader tell what you are asking for? Would the reader say "yes" if he or she received this letter? Can your letter be improved?
- Use spell check and grammar check on the computer. Or ask someone reliable to edit your letter before you send it.
- Keep a copy for your records.

Model Letter

Today's Date (include month, day, and year)

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Daytime telephone number

Name of person to whom you're writing
Title
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear *(Person's name)*,

At our meeting (or during our phone conversation) on *(date)*, we discussed my child's *(evaluation, eligibility, placement, IEP, services, etc.)*. I requested *(_____)*. . . and I was told the school intends to *(_____)*. . . but I have never received any information about this decision in writing. In keeping with the IDEA regulations, I am requesting prior written notice regarding *(be very specific about the issue/decision you want the school to respond to. Bullet or number the items.)*

According to the IDEA, at 34 CRF §300.503, prior written notice must include the following:

1. A description of what the school is proposing or refusing to do;
2. An explanation of why the school proposes or refuses this action;
3. A description of any other options the school considered and the reasons why those options were rejected;
4. A description of each evaluation procedure, test, record, or report the school used as a basis for this decision;
5. A description of any other relevant factors that went into this decision;
6. Information on how I can obtain a copy of procedural safeguards available to me under the law and a full explanation of the safeguards, and
7. Information on sources I can contact for help in understanding IDEA's regulations.

I look forward to receiving a detailed response to my request as soon as possible. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

(Your name)

cc: the principal, supervisor, or special education administrator
other members of the meeting

*Note: The “cc:” at the bottom of the letter means you are sending a copy of your letter to the people listed after the cc.



Highly Rated Resource! This resource was reviewed by 3-member panels of Parent Center staff working independently from one another to rate the quality, relevance, and usefulness of CPIR resources. This resource was found to be of “High Quality, High Relevance, High Usefulness” to Parent Centers.



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