



Parental Right to Participate in Meetings

A handout in CPIR's e-module *Right to Receive Notice and to Participate in Meetings*

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<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/participation/>

The right to participate in meetings related to their child...

is one of the most important and powerful of parent rights.

Parents have the right to participate in meetings with respect to:

- their child's identification,
- their child's evaluation,
- their child's educational placement, and
- provision of FAPE (free appropriate public education) to their child.

This includes the right to participate in meetings to develop, review, or revise their child's individualized education program (IEP). Parents also have the right to be part of:

- any group that determines if the child is a "child with a disability" and, for that reason, is eligible to receive special education and related services under IDEA;
- the IEP team (which develops, reviews, and revises the IEP of their child); and
- any group that makes decisions related to the educational placement of their child.



Keep reading to learn the details of this right.

Responsibilities of the School System

It's interesting to note the direct connection between the parents' right to participate in specific meetings and groups and the responsibilities that the school system has as a result. For example, IDEA states:

(b) *Parent participation in meetings.* (1) The parents of a child with a disability must be afforded an opportunity to participate in meetings with respect to—

(i) The identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child; and

When the child is moving from early intervention to special education services. Is your child currently receiving early intervention services under Part C of IDEA? Is he or she moving now to receiving special education services under Part B? This usually happens sometime around the 3rd birthday.



If so, the school must call an IEP meeting in order to develop an individualized education program for your child. If this notice from the school is for the *initial* meeting of the IEP team for a child under Part B, then the school must also inform you, as parents, that, if you so choose, the Part C coordinator from the early intervention program (or other representatives of the Part C system) can also be invited to attend. The purpose? To ensure the child's smooth transition from one system of services to another.

Inviting the Part C coordinator to the meeting is not automatic. It's at the discretion of the parents. If you, as parents, would like the Part C coordinator (or other representative of the Part C system) to attend the meeting, share your wishes with the school, who will then issue the invitation.

When a purpose of the meeting is to consider postsecondary goals and transition services for your child. IDEA requires that each child with a disability begin to plan for transition to adult life beginning no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16 years old (or younger, if the IEP team determines that starting sooner would be appropriate).



Is this the case with your child? Is one of the purposes of the upcoming meeting to consider postsecondary goals and transition services for your child? If so, then the notice provided to parents by the school must:

- indicate that planning for transition will be one of the purposes of the meeting;
- indicate that the school will invite the students; and
- identify any other agency that will be invited to send a representative (the school will need your permission before it may invite that representative).

What happens if neither of the parents can attend the meeting?

If neither parent can attend the IEP team meeting, the school must use other methods to ensure their participation, including individual telephone calls or conference calls.

May the school hold the meeting without the parent(s) in attendance?

Yes, the school may hold the meeting without the parent(s) attending, if it's unable to convince the parent(s) to attend. In this case, the school must document its attempts to arrange a mutually agreed upon time and place for the meeting, such as:

- a detailed record of all phone calls made or attempted, and the results of each;
- copies of correspondence sent to parents and whatever reply was received; and
- a detailed record of visits made to the parents' house or place of employment, and the results of these visits.

What is *not* considered a “meeting”?

IDEA stipulates the limits of the term “meeting” and what we can consider a “meeting” that triggers the rights of parent notification and participation. A “meeting” does *not* include:

- informal or unscheduled conversations that involve school personnel;
- conversations on topics such as teaching methodology, lesson plans, or the coordination of service provision; or
- preparatory activities that school personnel engage in to develop a proposal or response to a parent proposal that will be discussed at a later meeting.



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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