Virtual IEP Meeting Tip Sheets

This resource was developed in response to requests from state and local educational agencies and parents about how to hold and participate in virtual individualized education program (IEP) meetings. While intended to meet a need during the current COVID-19 pandemic, we hope the content will have broader application.

Contents

A Collaborative Effort Across OSEP-Funded Projects

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Virtual IEP Meetings: Technology Tips for All Participants

	Be patient—technology may not work as intended. Assume that everyone is doing their best.
	Test out technology in advance, and make sure all devices are charged.
	Have a back-up plan ready in the event technology issues arise.
	Join the meeting about 10−15 minutes in advance to troubleshoot any technology issues.
	Actively listen and participate in the meeting.
	Set up a meeting space that reduces potential distractions to minimize background noise as much as possible.
	Ensure the security of confidential information before, during, and after the meeting.
	Turn off any notifications on your computer—they may show up on others' screens.
	Use headphones or a headset with built-in microphone, when possible.
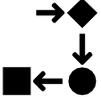
Hosting Virtual IEP Meetings: Tips for Success

Did you know that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allows IEP teams to use "alternative means of meeting participation, such as video conferences and conference calls" (34 CFR §300.328)? No matter the format of the meeting, all required participants[1]—including parents[2]—should be present and/or appropriately excused from the meeting [if mutually agreed upon in writing; 34 CFR §300.321(e)(2)]. Below are tips for educators on hosting effective and efficient virtual IEP meetings.

Before the Meeting	During the Meeting	After the Meeting
▪ Review student privacy guidelines.[3] ▪ Contact parents to learn their access needs and potential barriers for participation; ask if anyone will be joining them. Confirm attendance. ▪ Share a meeting agenda and norms, including the parents' items, and identify roles for school professionals. ▪ Inform parents how they can share information and documents in advance, and ensure team members have access to all documents shared during the meeting.[4] ▪ Send meeting invitations and directions for participation. Include a back-up plan in the event of technology issues. ▪ Select a meeting approach to ensure all members can participate. ▪ Arrange for interpreters or other supports, if needed.	▪ Follow student privacy guidelines. ▪ Keep focused on the student's needs. ▪ Use a meeting agenda and norms to ensure all team members can participate. ▪ Begin with introductions and use video, as appropriate. ▪ Pause often and allow enough wait time for participant questions and feedback. ▪ Display the IEP document or other documents being discussed on the screen, if available, or state the page number being referenced. ▪ Before moving to the next discussion item, rephrase or repeat agreed-upon language from the current discussion. ▪ Discuss and agree on processes for obtaining forms or signatures, if necessary. ▪ Confirm the method (e.g., U.S. mail, e-mail) for delivering a copy of the student's completed IEP and prior written notice. Communicate the anticipated arrival date.	▪ Follow student privacy guidelines. ▪ Follow procedures for obtaining completed forms or signatures, if necessary.[5] ▪ Conduct a follow-up call with parents to answer any questions or concerns and to debrief how the meeting went. ▪ Deliver a copy of the finalized IEP and prior written notice to parents, using translations as appropriate. ▪ Make sure that all educators and related service providers receive a copy of the IEP and are informed of their responsibilities related to implementation [34 CFR §300.323(d)]. ▪ Implement the IEP as written. ▪ Provide parents with periodic reports of student progress.

[1] As appropriate, students should be included.

[2] The term "parent" as defined in the federal regulations (34 CFR §300.30) is used in this document.

[3] Follow state and federal FERPA and virtual education technology requirements and student privacy requirements.

[4] Include an old IEP or a draft IEP, if available. Be mindful that not all team members have access to printers or other technology. Coordinate the best way to share information. Be sure to include information in the native language of the parents.

[5] Coordinate with the IEP team about how signatures will be obtained (e.g., electronic signatures or mailed and returned).

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Common Questions and Answers About Hosting Virtual IEP Meetings

What alternative means of meeting participation are available? There are many approaches for hosting virtual meetings, but not all offer the same features or security. Always check with your state or district for what options exist. If none are available, many free or low-cost virtual meeting applications include screen sharing, audio, and video capabilities.	**What if participants do not have access to the Internet or a video camera?** While video and screen sharing can enhance engagement, they are not required. IEP meetings can be conducted using a conference line, which is accessible through a traditional phone line or through most virtual meeting platforms. Because screen sharing is not available without Internet access, consider sending home copies of any materials that will be discussed during the meeting via e-mail (within the parent's permission) or by U.S. mail.
How can I ensure the meeting maintains student privacy? Check out the U.S. Department of Education's Student Privacy Policy Office (SPPO): _FERPA and Virtual Learning Related Resources,_ which summarizes Department privacy resources and guidance, including the Office of Technology's _Protecting Student_ _Privacy While Using Online Educational Services_. It is also important to check for additional state and district policies.	**How can I maximize the virtual platform and increase participation during meetings?** Use these tips from practitioners: ▪ Select a virtual meeting approach that allows appropriate participation of parents and other team members. ▪ Conduct practice session(s) with staff and parents before the meeting. ▪ Share tip sheets or a brief video recording about how to use the platform. ▪ Begin the meeting with a brief tutorial of the meeting platform features, including how to mute, unmute, and share cameras.

Participating in Virtual IEP Meetings: Tips for IEP Team Members

Did you know that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allows individualized education program (IEP) teams to use "alternative means of meeting participation, such as video conferences and conference calls" ([34 CFR §300.328](#))? No matter the format of the meeting, [all](#) [required participants](#)[6]—including [parents](#)[7]—should be present and/or appropriately excused from the meeting [if mutually agreed upon in writing; [34 CFR §300.321(e)(2)](#)]. Below are tips for IEP team members for participating in virtual IEP meetings.

Before the Meeting	During the Meeting	After the Meeting
▪ Ask how student privacy will be protected. ▪ Share your technology concerns or potential barriers to your participation on the IEP team. Confirm participation. ▪ Ask about the technology platform and the requirements for successful use. ▪ Ask for an agenda for the virtual meeting and any meeting norms. ▪ Ask if there is a back-up plan in case the technology does not work. What is it? ▪ Create your own back-up plan (e.g., print the documents, charge your phone, have the call-in number readily available). ▪ Remove distractions and minimize background noise as much as possible. ▪ Request [interpreters](#) or other supports, if needed. ▪ If you anticipate any disagreements, develop a plan to address them.	▪ Follow student privacy guidelines. ▪ Begin with introductions and use video cameras, as appropriate. ▪ Listen closely and wait to share your thoughts and ideas until the current speaker finishes. ▪ Stop often and allow enough wait time for questions and feedback. ▪ Discuss and agree on the processes for obtaining forms or signatures, if necessary. ▪ Confirm the method for delivering a copy of the completed IEP (e.g., mail, e-mail) and the anticipated arrival date.	▪ Follow student privacy guidelines. ▪ Provide signatures, if necessary.[8] ▪ Offer feedback on the virtual meeting process. Share any questions or concerns. ▪ Follow up if you do not receive a copy of the IEP by the expected arrival date. ▪ Ensure that the IEP is implemented. ▪ Continue to share student progress and any concerns with each other. ▪ Develop a plan for addressing disagreements. ▪ Resolve any conflicts as soon as possible at the local level. Use the dispute resolution option (e.g., IEP facilitation, mediation, written state complaint, due process) that best fits the situation to address any unresolved conflicts. Contact your state education agency or [OSEP-funded parent center](#) for more information.

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[7] The term "parent" as defined in the federal regulations (34 CFR §300.30) is used in this document.

[8] Coordinate with the IEP team about how signatures will be obtained (e.g., electronic signatures or mailed and returned).

Common Questions and Answers About Participating in Virtual IEP Meetings

What alternative means of meeting participation are available?	**What if I do not have access to the Internet or a video camera?**	**How can I be sure the IEP process will be confidential?**	**What supports are available?**
There are many approaches for hosting virtual meetings, but not all offer the same features or security. • Always check with your district for available options. • Ask about screen sharing, audio, and video capabilities, as well as security features. • Download and install the needed software well before the meeting.	While video and screen sharing can enhance engagement, they are not required. IEP meetings can be conducted using a conference line, which is accessible through a traditional phone line or through most virtual meeting platforms. Ask for all documents to be shared via e-mail or U.S. mail before the meeting.	• Ask how the school will ensure student privacy. • Make sure that you are in a location where others will not overhear the conversations during the meeting. • Share documents in a secure manner.	• Request support from your local parent center or district about how to participate effectively. • Parents may find it helpful to invite a support person or advocate to the virtual meeting. • Parents should let the IEP team know in advance if anyone else will be attending and determine how to best communicate with that person during the meeting.