



## Frequently Asked Questions about IEP/504 Meeting Facilitation

- ❖ **What steps can you take before requesting IEP/504 facilitation?**
  - Talk with school personnel about your concerns. Reasonable efforts should be made to resolve the problem at the school district or school level.
  - Make an appointment to talk to or meet with your director of special education to discuss the issues.
  - Contact the RIDE Call Center at 401-222-8999
- ❖ **What is IEP/504 Facilitation?**
  - Facilitation takes place in a regular team meeting such as an IEP team meeting or 504 planning meeting. The impartial facilitator keeps the focus of the meeting on a productive student-centered IEP/504 plan process, conducted in a respectful and collaborative way, so an agreeable IEP/504 can be developed in a timely manner.
- ❖ **When should IEP Facilitation be considered?**
  - When team members feel they would benefit from a neutral third party facilitating the meeting.
  - Before a definite dispute arises.
  - When previous attempts to resolve issues related to the IEP/504 plan have been unsuccessful.
- ❖ **Who can request a facilitator?**
  - A facilitator may be requested by either the parent or school district personnel. Both parties **MUST** agree to participate in this voluntary process.
- ❖ **Who are the facilitators?**
  - A facilitator is trained to promote effective listening and discussion.
  - A facilitator is **NOT** a decision-maker or a member of the IEP/504 team.
  - A facilitator is a neutral third party who does not take sides, place blame, impose a decision on the group nor offer an opinion on the appropriateness of a decision.
- ❖ **What does the facilitator do?**
  - Talk to parents and school staff in advance of the meeting.
  - Assists the team with creating an agenda and meeting guidelines.

- Guides the discussion and keeps the focus on the student.
  - Makes sure everyone has a chance to voice their opinions and ideas.
  - Help resolve disagreements, as they arise.
  - Models and uses communications skills to help parents and school personnel to work together to make decisions.
  - Help team members clarify any issues that may have occurred.
  - Help keep the team on task and focused on the agreed upon agenda.
- ❖ **What happens once RIDE identifies the facilitator?**
- The facilitator will reach out to the school and the parents to affirm agreement from both parties. Since the facilitator's role is to maintain neutrality, any information shared with the facilitator during initial contact is subject to being shared with the other party. Parties should refrain from "presenting their case" to the facilitator during the initial contact.
- ❖ **Is there any type of procedural notice that parents receive regarding a facilitated IEP/504 planning meeting?**
- The same notification procedures found in IDEA apply. Districts must give parents proper notice including the place, time, potential attendees and the purpose of the meeting. If the student is 14+ years old, the student will be invited.
- ❖ **How long does a Facilitated IEP/504 meeting last?**
- A Facilitated IEP/504 meeting may take longer (up to two (2) hours) than a standard IEP meeting. A facilitated IEP /504 meeting can always be reconvened, if consensus on the plan is not reached at the first meeting.
- ❖ **How much does IEP/504 Plan Facilitation cost?**
- Facilitation is free to the school or parent.
- ❖ **What if only one party wants a facilitator?**
- Both parties must agree to use a facilitator. If schools and families don't agree on proceeding with facilitation, IEP/504 Facilitation will NOT happen.
- ❖ **Does RIDE always provide a Facilitator when requested?**
- No, there are several reasons why RIDE may not provide a facilitator, including the reasons detailed below. The below reasons are merely exemplary and are not exhaustive.
  - Either the parent or school must complete and submit the Request for Facilitation form.
  - The contention must be related to the IEP/504 plan in which the IEP team is struggling to reach agreement.
  - A facilitator must be available within a reasonable time that the IEP is due, so as not to cause a delay of the IEP meeting.

- The dispute must NOT be about a manifestation determination or placement in an interim alternative educational setting.
- A Facilitated IEP/504 team meeting will not be scheduled if formal dispute options have been initiated.

### ❖ How do I prepare for a facilitated IEP/504 planning meeting?

- For families:
  - Assume positive intent. Your child's teacher will, oftentimes, want the same for your child as you do.
  - Attend a workshop or training through a parent group.
  - List your child's strengths, needs and your concerns.
  - Come to the meeting with written questions.
  - Organize your documents and highlight points you want addressed.
  - Be solution focused and open to new ideas.
  - Think about where your child is now and where you want them to be in a year.
- For schools:
  - Keep an open mind. A student's family is your partner.
  - Come to the meeting with updated, relevant data on the student.
  - Bring a proposed IEP that is data driven and reflects the unique individual needs of the student.
  - Be willing to collaborate with all team members. Remember that a DRAFT plan is meant to be changed.
  - Think about where the student is now and where you want them to be in a year.

### ❖ If RIDE declines to provide a facilitator, may the parties appeal the decision?

- No. The decision is final and is not subject to review or appeal.
- Cases not accepted for facilitation will be referred to the OSCAS Special Education Call Center to discuss other dispute resolution options.

### ❖ How do I get a Facilitated IEP/504 planning meeting?

- Contact your school district to discuss initiating this option.
- Contact RIDE's Call Center at 401-222-8999
- Complete the form found at <https://forms.office.com/r/b2AQsP6VdM?origin=lprLink>
- Scan the QR code

