

A decorative border of pencils and erasers surrounds the text. The border consists of a top row of 20 pencils, a bottom row of 20 pencils, and two vertical columns of 10 pencils each. The pencils are arranged in a slightly curved pattern. There are four shaded circular erasers, one on each side of the page, positioned between the top and bottom rows of pencils.

# Parent Tool Kit

## For Understanding

## Disability Services

# Special Education Referral and Admission Process

1. Meet with your child's teacher or the Head Start Disabilities Coordinator to discuss concerns
2. Complete the Head Start "Referral for Special Needs Evaluation" form with Head Start staff
3. Head Start will submit the referral form to the local school system
  - a. The submission of this referral form does not affect the school system's official referral timeline
4. Meet with a representative of the school system's special education staff to discuss parent rights and obtain permission to complete an evaluation of your child
5. The school system will complete individual evaluation(s)
6. Attend the Case Conference (commonly referred to as an IEP Meeting)
  - a. Determine eligibility of disability
  - b. Create the IEP
7. The staff will begin providing special education services
8. Attend an Annual Case Review (ACR) to discuss your child's progress within the year; or, attend a transition case conference to determine the services your child will receive in kindergarten
9. The school system will complete a triennial evaluation (every 3 years), if needed, to determine if your child is still eligible for services



# IEP Basics

## What a Parent Should Know

The case conference is the first step to building a positive relationship with your child's teachers. As a parent, it is your opportunity to meet with the school staff and discuss your child's past and future performance in school.

### **What is an IEP?**

IEP stands for *Individualized Education Plan*. Children that have an IEP are or will be receiving special education services. The IEP is a written document that gives information about how the child is currently doing in school, what the school will do to help the child, and what services the school will provide for the child.

### **Who is a part of the IEP Team?**

The parents of the child, a representative of the child's preschool, at least one special education teacher of the child, a qualified special education representative of the school system to take notes during the meeting, and at the parent's discretion, other individuals who may be helpful participants.

### **What is case conference?**

The case conference helps the IEP Team discuss and agree on ways to help your child achieve academic success. The team decides where and how your child will receive the help that he or she needs to be successful in school. The team will determine if your child needs special education services and decide what services would be suitable for your child.

### **Is it important that I go to the case conference?**



YES! Parental involvement is the key to your child's success at school. The information that you can provide at these meetings is very important to achieving your child's educational goals in school and at home.

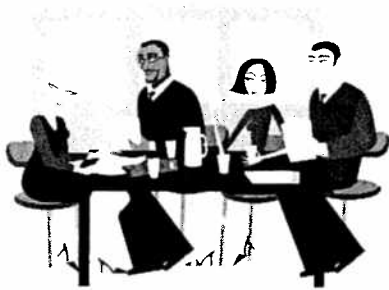


# What Happens at a Case Conference?

If this is your first case conference, expect to hear the results of the tests that the school system staff completed, classroom performance, and behavior. Be prepared to hear about your child's strengths and his or her weaknesses. The school staff will have recommendations for how they can help your child in his or her areas of weakness as well as how the team can best promote your child's strengths.

## **What is covered in a case conference?**

- Introductions to all participants and staff from the school system
  - Discuss the results of the evaluations and testing
  - Allow you the opportunity to share hopes and concerns for your child
  - Determine if your child has a need for special education services
  - Discuss what skills your child needs to improve upon
  - Develop educational goals
    - Teachers/therapists will work with you to create appropriate goals for your child
    - You can ask for additional skills to be addressed
  - Determine how many minutes of special education and related services your child will need (speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, etc)
  - Sign the finalized IEP when all services are mutually agreed upon
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# Participation at the Case Conference

## Suggestions for Parents

1. **If at any point you do not understand something,** ask that it be restated. Do not hesitate to ask for clarification of any detail.
2. **If you do not understand the meaning of an educational term,** ask for an example or demonstration of what is meant.
3. **Share relevant information about your child** by contributing what you know about your child's skills, interests, weaknesses, and strengths.
4. **Refer to your list of questions** and any notes you have brought to see that all issues you feel that are important have been discussed. Ask for further discussion whenever necessary.
5. **When you are given a copy of your Parent Rights,** ask that they be explained to you.
6. **Be sure all services that are necessary to implement your child's educational plan** will be written into the IEP.
7. **Ask yourself, "Is my child able to do what is being planned?"**

# Preparing for the Case Conference

Tips for Parents

## **Before the Meeting:**

1. Write down the date and time of the case conference. Arrive for the meeting at least 5 minutes early to get settled. If you cannot attend the case conference, call the school and ask to reschedule.
2. Know the purpose and format of the case conference. Find out who will be there, what is on the agenda, and how much time has been allotted for the meeting.
3. Get materials from the school ahead of time; you are entitled to receive a copy of the proposed IEP documents prior to the meeting. Contact your child's special education teacher if you did not receive a copy.
4. If you do not understand what is in any document, write down questions to bring to the case conference.
5. Write down goals you have for your child. Make a list of what your child is interested in and what he/she can do at home. Are there things you feel your child should be able to do that he/she is not doing now?
6. Have someone you trust attend the case conference with you to offer moral support, take notes, and help you stay on track.

## **During the Meeting:**

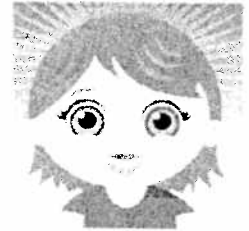
1. You will receive your Parent Rights at the beginning of the case conference.
2. ASK QUESTIONS! If there is something you don't understand, ask to have it explained.
3. Share your thoughts, knowledge, insights, and concerns. You are a very important part of the team and your input is valuable.
4. Focus on what you want for your child; the team may have some great ideas you haven't thought of.
5. Take notes. You will receive a lot of information at this meeting and it can be overwhelming. It will help if you have notes that you can review when you get home.
6. Voice your concerns. If you do not agree with the plan, talk with the team. Remember, although the school's input and direction may be different than yours, it may be equally valid.
7. Sign wisely. You do not have to sign at the meeting; you can take everything home and consider it.
8. Get your paperwork. At the end of the meeting, you should receive a copy of your child's IEP.

## **After the Meeting:**

1. Review the IEP papers at home. Call the school if you do not understand the documents.
2. File the IEP and related papers in one place.
3. Track and monitor your child's progress; take notes when your child is completing IEP objectives at home. Keep in contact with the teacher(s).
4. Continue the plan at home. For example, if your child is learning to say the "d" sound in speech therapy, practice that at home.
5. If you are not satisfied with your child's progress, you may request a new case conference at any time. Make the request in writing; the team is required to meet within 30 days of your request.



# Notes for the Case Conference



## Meeting and Understanding the Child

My child's name is: \_\_\_\_\_ . My child is \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

1. At home, my child is like:

2. My child likes (things, people, activities):

3. My child dislikes:

4. My child is good at:

5. Concerns I have about my child are:

6. My child needs to improve in:

7. I want my child to learn:

## Special Education Commonly Used Terms

Acronym	Term	Definition
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	Mandate that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities
	Annual Goal	Statements on the IEP that describe what the child can be expected to accomplish in one year
	Article 7	Indiana's Special Education Law
	Assessment	Methods used for measuring present levels of performance, educational needs, eligibility for service, progress toward achieving goals, and category of disability
CC	Case Conference	Parents and the school system meet to review and interpret the information on the IEP and make decisions about the education of a child with special needs
EC	Early Childhood	Public school special education services for ages 3-5
EI	Early Intervention Services	Services provided to children with developmental delays from birth to age 3 (First Steps)
	Evaluation	Procedures used to determine if a child has a disability and the extent of special education and related services needed
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act	Assures family and child confidentiality
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education	Special education and related services provided at public expense, under public supervision, and at no cost to parents
FBA	Functional Behavior Assessment	A process that may include interviews, direct observations, and other evaluations of the child's behaviors

Acronym	Term	Definition
	General Education	The instruction, services, and activities provided for all students (with or without disabilities)
IEP	Individualized Education Program	A written plan of annual goals and short-term objectives developed to meet the child's educational needs (ages 3-5)
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan	A written plan for early intervention services while a child is in First Steps (ages 0-3)
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	Federal law that specifies requirements on procedures and services provided by educational agencies for children with special needs
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment	As much as possible, children with disabilities are included and educated in classes with non-disabled peers; removal from the regular classroom only when necessary to meet needs
LEA	Local Education Agency	The public school system that directs and performs services for children with special needs
	Present Levels of Performance	This information provides a statement of the child's strengths, needs, progress on the current IEP, and input from case conference team members
	Related Services	Support services needed to help the child with a disability benefit from special education (ex., Occupational Therapy (OT), Physical Therapy (PT))
	Short-Term Objectives	Small, measurable steps that lead to the completion of each annual goal
	Special Education	Specifically designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability

# Eligibility Criteria for Disability Services

## **1. Autism spectrum disorder:**

A developmental disability that includes autism and Asperger's syndrome, which significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction. This disability is generally apparent before age 3 and negatively affects the child's educational performance.

## **2. Blind or low vision:**

May be referred to as a visual impairment and is a disability that, even with correction (glasses, etc.), negatively affects the child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

## **3. Cognitive disability**

Significantly below average intellectual functioning (formally referred to as mental retardation) which negatively affects the child's educational performance.

## **4. Deaf or hard of hearing**

May be referred to as hearing impairment, which means a disability that, with or without amplification, negatively affects the child's ability to use hearing for developing language and learning. The hearing loss may vary but negatively affects the child's educational performance and developmental progress.

## **5. Deaf-blind**

A disability in which hearing and visual impairments are connected; the combination causes severe communication and other developmental and educational challenges that requires significant special education accommodations.

## **6. Developmental delay**

A category solely for children who are at least 3 years old but not older than a child eligible for kindergarten which includes a delay in any of the following categories: gross motor development, fine motor development, cognitive development, receptive/expressive language development, social/emotional development, self-help development, or other adaptive development.

## **7. Emotional disability**

An inability to learn or progress that is not because of cognitive, sensory, or health factors. A child with this disability may have one or more of the following characteristics: develop fears associated with personal or school problems, persistently unhappy or depressed, inability to make or maintain friendships, etc.

## **8. Language or speech impairment**

A communication disorder, such as stuttering, inability to make the sounds appropriate to his/her age (articulation), difficulty with comprehension or expression of spoken or written language, or a voice disorder that negatively affects a child's educational performance.

## **9. Multiple disabilities**

A combination of two or more disabilities, including one cognitive disability, which causes severe educational challenges. The term does not include deaf-blind.

## **10. Other health impairment**

Having limited strength, energy, or awareness that results in limited alertness in the educational environment due to health problems such as asthma, ADD or ADHD, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome.

## **11. Orthopedic impairment**

A severe physically disabling condition that negatively affects a child's educational performance. This term may include a congenital anomaly (i.e. clubfoot or absence of some member), impairments caused by a disease (i.e. bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (i.e. cerebral palsy, amputation, etc.)

## **12. Specific learning disability**

A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that negatively affect the child's educational performance.

## **13. Traumatic brain injury**

An acquired injury to the brain that results in total or partial disability or impairment that negatively affects a child's educational performance.