mn DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

Tips for Person-Centered Remote/Online Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team Meetings

Why person-centered?

Good IEP team meetings use person-centered practices, and in *remote/online* IEP team meetings, person-centered practices help engage people in meaningful ways – even on Zoom.

Person-centered practices are a continuum of strategies and activities that support the informed choice of students and families to make or have input into both major transitions and everyday life decisions. Person-centered practices focus on the interests and needs of the person receiving instruction or support. They emphasize each person's strengths and dreams rather than weaknesses or deficits.

Person-centered IEP team meetings assist students and families to create a vision and goals with support from teachers and other professionals in their lives, to plan for successful school experiences and life after school. This empowers students in two ways: They engage in meaningful ways with the IEP team and with the planning of their IEP, and they benefit from coordinated efforts by the people who work with them across home, school and community.

Best practice considerations include: the student should be present at the IEP meeting and be encouraged to take an active role such as leading, sharing their vision for their best life, or contributing agenda items. Even if IEP team meetings are remote/online, all due process requirements continue to apply, including free appropriate public education (FAPE) and parental participation.

What works for successful person-centered remote/online IEP meetings?

Person-centered tools help to identify students' strengths and interests, create a vision for the future and develop action steps to work toward that vision. Both the Minnesota Departments of Education and Human Services have connections to those resources and tools (see "Resources" links included below).

Good remote/online meeting preparation and facilitation skills also help ensure that these meetings are effective. Here are a few tips for students, families, meeting facilitators, and others:

[Tips for students and families](#)

[Tips for others invited to the meeting](#)

[Tips for meeting facilitators](#)

Tips for students and families

Students and families bring strengths and assets to the IEP team meeting, including history, knowledge of what works, and what motivates and supports the student.

Students have ideas and thoughts about what makes a good day and what you want for a good life. They also are the best reporter of their interests, strengths and future vision.

[Consider using tools on the Minnesota Disability Hub](https://disabilityhubmn.org/hub-partners/charting-the-lifecourse) (https://disabilityhubmn.org/hub-partners/charting-the-lifecourse), especially the trajectory form charting one's journey to a good life.

Before the IEP Team Meeting

- Students: plan how you want to participate in the IEP team meeting, for example attend the meeting, participate actively, or lead the meeting.
- If you as a student receive services or supports from county social services, health care, vocational rehabilitation, corrections, etc., consider inviting all team members, including other family members and/or important people in your life, to the IEP team meeting.
- Share with the IEP case manager any agenda items, concerns and possible solutions, as well as any relevant documents, such as the trajectory form, ahead of time (preferably 3-5 days before the meeting).
- Try to find a quiet location where you can connect to WiFi and participate in the meeting without being interrupted or overheard. Since it can be helpful to see one another during remote/online IEP team meetings, consider whether you would feel comfortable being on camera there for about an hour. (Using a virtual background can be a more private way to show up on camera.)
- Make sure that you know what platform (Zoom, Skype, etc.) the IEP team meeting will be in and check to make sure you have access. Do you need any information on how to use it? Who can help you?
- Test your technology and make sure your device is charged. Have a back-up plan, such as access to a phone number, in case in case anything goes wrong with technology.
- Plan to log on at least five minutes early to make sure everything is working properly.

During the IEP Team Meeting

- Make sure you have access to all the materials shared and discussed before the meeting.
- Have your camera on and microphone on mute unless speaking. (Remember to "unmute" and make sure people can hear you when speaking.)

After the IEP Team Meeting

- Review completed IEP document to assure it reflects your student's goals and interests.
- Follow up with team members for any clarifications or actions needed.

Tips for others invited to the meeting

Because of your relationship with the student or family through your friend/family role, or agency/community services, your contributions to the IEP team meeting are important. Participating together can save time and get everyone on the same page with the student.

Before the IEP Team Meeting

- Share with the IEP case manager any agenda items, concerns and possible solutions, as well as any relevant documents, such as the trajectory, ahead of time (preferably 3-5 days before the meeting).
- Be ready to play a role in the IEP team meeting, for example, attend the meeting, participate actively, or lead the meeting.
- Try to find a quiet location where you can connect to WiFi and participate in the meeting without being interrupted or overheard. Since it can be helpful to see one another during remote/online IEP team meetings, consider whether you would feel comfortable being on camera there for about an hour. (Using a virtual background can be a more private way to show up on camera.)
- Test your technology and make sure your device is charged.
- Have a back-up plan, such as access to a phone number, in case in case anything goes wrong with technology.

During the IEP Team Meeting

- Make sure you have access to all the materials shared and discussed during the meeting.
- Have your camera on and microphone on mute unless speaking. (Remember to "unmute" and make sure people can hear you when speaking.)

After the IEP Team Meeting

- Follow up on any action items assigned to you.

Tips for meeting facilitators

The meeting facilitator may be anyone on the team. Typically this is the IEP case manager, whose role is to gather information, identify participants, send the invitation, formalize agenda, facilitate everyone's participation in the meeting.

Before the IEP Team Meeting

- Pick a date for the meeting and arrange for meeting platform (Zoom, Blue Jeans, etc.). Make sure thle to access whatever platform is being used.
- Encourage the student to attend the IEP meeting, and to take an active role such as leading, sharing vision for their best life, or contributing agenda items.
- Consider developing and sharing an agenda (roles/ responsibilities, time for each topic, next steps/action items, time for questions or concerns) preferably at least 3-5 days ahead of time.
- Make sure all participants have access to all materials that will be talked about, such as the IEP document, trajectory forms or other information shared by team members.
- Send simple, clear instructions to join the meeting, and encourage people to sign on at least 5 minutes ahead of time to make sure everything is working properly.
- In addition to a facilitator, it's helpful to have a monitor, timekeeper and notetaker. These roles may be assigned before or at the beginning of the meeting:

  - Facilitator solicits responses, e.g. round robin call-outs, and "reads the Zoom," paying attention to participants and making sure everyone is heard (especially student and family participants)
  - Monitor keeps an eye on participant connections via technology/phone and monitors the chat and other platform features such as raised hands.
  - Timekeeper keeps an eye on the clock and lets the facilitator know when it's time to move on.
  - Notetaker documents decisions, action items, and IEP items, possibly using the shared screen feature. Make sure they have the appropriate templates, such as IEP template or space for notes right on the agenda.

- Create a backup plan in case of technology problems (create a duplicate meeting on another virtual platform, offer a phone-in option, etc.) Test your technology and make sure your device is charged.
- Make every attempt to ensure privacy for yourself and others participating.

During the IEP Team Meeting

- Log in 10–15 minutes ahead of time to make sure everything is working that day and greet people as they arrive.
- Include time for introductions, and review meeting objectives and ground rules for each meeting, such as: cameras on, mute unless speaking, say your name when speaking (every time), speak loudly and toward the microphone, and ways to contribute to the discussion (unstructured, use hand-raise function, chat, round robin, etc.)

- Review roles (facilitator, monitor, timekeeper, observer, etc.)
- Explain that you may move conversations along to stay on track with time and may use a "parking lot" to keep track of topics for a later date.
- Check in with participants frequently and provide enough wait time to allow for questions and feedback.
- Periodically ask for agreement regarding the descriptions of strengths, goals, accommodations etc., for addition to the draft IEP.
- Consider using the chat feature and/or doing a round robin to collect feedback from everyone.
- Ensure that the student and family know the next steps for finalizing the IEP.

After the IEP Team Meeting

- Communicate to all team members the decisions, action items, and IEP items.

Resources

Ten easy steps for a person-centered IEP (https://education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/sped/MDE074103)

"The Seven Secrets of Successful Virtual Meetings," Project Management Institute, updated May 10, 2011 (https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/successful-virtual-meetings-skills-improvement-6267)

"9 Best Practices for Engagement in Virtual Meetings," Nonprofit Technology Conference, updated October 10, 2017 (https://www.nten.org/article/9-best-practices-engagement-virtual-meetings/)

"8 Obvious (and Not-So-Obvious) Tips to Running a Successful Virtual Meeting," ProxyClick Blog, updated February 17, 2017 (https://www.proxyclick.com/blog/8-tips-running-a-successful-virtual-meeting)

"How Virtual Teams Can Create Human Connections Despite Distance," Harvard Business Review, updated January 31, 2014 (https://hbr.org/2014/01/how-virtual-teams-can-create-human-connections-despite-distance)

"How Many Multi-Tasking on Conference Calls? 100%," NetAge Endless Knots, updated March 23, 2009 (https://endlessknots.netage.com/endlessknots/2009/03/how-many-multitasking-on-conference-calls-100.html)

"How to Boost Participant Engagement in Online Meetings," West UC Blog, updated January 10, 2018 (https://www.westuc.com/en-us/blog/conferencing-collaboration/how-boost-participant-engagement-online-meetings)

Remote IEP Resources

- [Overall information for online IEP meetings](https://edplan.com/blog/post/conducting-iep-meetings-covid-19) (https://edplan.com/blog/post/conducting-iep-meetings-covid-19)
- [Soft skills for online IEP meetings](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/for-educators/learning-and-thinking-differences-basics/how-im-leading-remote-iep-meetings) (https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/for-educators/learning-and-thinking-differences-basics/how-im-leading-remote-iep-meetings)
- [Question and answer format](), includes [remote IEP checklist]() (https://www.electronic-therapy.com/blog/practical-guide-your-first-remote-iep-meeting/)
- [Overall care for special education students in COVID-19 times, plus focus on adapting goals to new circumstances]() https://www.edutopia.org/article/6-ways-transition-iep-goals-remote-learning