Special Education
Role Clarification: District Representative at IEP Meetings

What are the qualifications of a District Representative?
- Is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of students eligible for special education;
- Is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum; and
- Is knowledgeable about the availability of resources in the school district.
- District representatives must have the authority to commit agency resources and ensure that services described will actually be provided.

Who should serve as the District Representative at an IEP meeting?
It is best if a building administrator is the district representative. It is realized, however, that attending every IEP meeting creates an undue burden on a building administrator, so it is possible for a building administrator to designate a specific individual to take his/her place. The building administrator, however, must ensure that this person is knowledgeable about his/her role in the meeting and that s/he clearly knows his/her limitations.
- The building administrator is responsible for informing the special education case managers who will be the district representatives for IEP meetings. It is not the role of the special education staff to determine district representatives.
- Participating in training by the Director of Special Services or designee is required before a person can serve as a district representative.

What are the duties of the District Representative?
- To ensure the proper members of the IEP team are present: special ed case manager (special ed teacher or therapist), general ed teacher of the student (if student is in private school, the teacher from the private school must be invited), therapists/counselor if student receives therapy or counseling, parent (unless parent has agreed to have a meeting without being present), someone who can interpret educational implications of evaluation results (usually the case manager and/or therapist).
- To ensure that the case manager designates someone to take minutes of the meeting.
- To ensure that the members of the team do not go beyond the scope of the IEP. (See “CAUTIONARY NOTES”)
- To keep the meeting going at a pace that is respectful of everyone’s time, yet still allows adequate parent participation.
- To ensure that the case manager obtains written consent from the parent to excuse an IEP team member for all or part of the meeting.

What if the all the members of the IEP team do not show up?
Place an urgent call to the missing member or find a replacement member who meets the qualifications. In order for the IEP meeting to be legal, all members must be present or excused in advance in writing by the parent.
- Excused members must submit information in advance of the meeting to the parent and the other members of the team and the parent must have signed the Excused Team Members form.
If the proper members cannot be there, you can hold a pre-IEP meeting and reschedule the IEP meeting when all can be there. No IEP decisions can be made at a pre-meeting, but many things can be discussed and refined. (Remember the IEP meeting must be rescheduled prior to the annual due date.)

What if the meeting is going beyond the allotted time?
The district representative and case manager will assess where they are in the process and either finish the meeting or reschedule another meeting. It is best to complete the meeting if at all possible since IEP meetings must be completed by the annual due date. It is OK to stop the meeting for a few minutes and talk privately as a district to determine what to do. Before adjourning the meeting, the case manager should note all areas that have been agreed upon and what remains to be discussed so the next IEP meeting is efficient.

What should happen if an idea is generated for additional resources and the district representative is uncertain if the resources are appropriate or available?
It is appropriate for the district representative to state at the meeting that the district needs to explore whether the resources are actually needed prior to making a decision. Thus, the team would need to reconvene after the district representative has completed an evaluation of the student and/or consulted with the Director of Special Services.

**What are examples of resources that might be requested at an IEP team meeting?**
Staffing, specific materials or equipment, placement in district or private programs, outside resources, etc.

**Can a dialogue occur with the Director of Special Services prior to an IEP team meeting to determine availability of resources?**
Yes. Prior to some IEP team meetings, it can be anticipated that additional resources may be necessary to implement an appropriate IEP for a student. It would be prudent to have a dialogue with the Director of Special Services to understand the scope of available resources so a decision could be made at a scheduled meeting.

**Who should have the dialogue with the Director of Special Services prior to an IEP team meeting in which additional resources may be a result?**
A building administrator needs to have this dialogue with the Director of Special Services. Once the building administrator has the information, he/she can decide if it is prudent for him/her to serve in the district representative role or if it is appropriate to identify another individual and provide that person with clear decision-making boundaries.

Other special education certificated staff members can have conversations with the Director of Special Services prior to meetings. These conversations, however, should not take the place of the dialogue in which a district representative has responsibility. It is easy to misinterpret and/or have communication gaps without the appropriate individuals having conversations.

**What if a parent brings new information to a meeting, such as an evaluation by an outside professional?**
District staff need to have sufficient time to thoughtfully review new information, so it is reasonable to complete the IEP meeting with the information the district already has, then reschedule another meeting to consider the new information if needed. If a parent asks for additional resources or services based on their private evaluation, it will usually trigger a district reevaluation. Bottom line: “When in debate, evaluate”.

**What if a parent brings an attorney?**
Do not have the meeting and inform the parent that we will need to schedule the meeting when our attorney can be present. Immediately call the Director of Special Services.

**CAUTIONARY NOTES – for all IEP members**
- **Don’t** discuss any other student (including siblings) in any manner.
  - e.g. Don’t say, “We have another student just like yours…”
- **Don’t** recommend that a student be referred for an evaluation by anyone outside of the district.
  - e.g. Don’t say, “I think you should take your child to XYZ for an evaluation.”
- **Don’t** diagnose anything that the district’s evaluation team has not already diagnosed.
  - e.g. Don’t say, “Your child acts like he has ADHD.”
- **Don’t** add services to the IEP that were not identified in the evaluation. Conducting an evaluation is the only way a service can be added.
  - e.g. Don’t say, “She needs math” or “He needs instruction in social skills too” unless the evaluation has already identified math or social skills as an area needing specially designed instruction.
- **Don’t** put specific methodology on the IEP
  - e.g. Don’t say, “SRA will be used to teach him reading.” or “We will use ABA therapy”.

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