

FACILITATED INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (FIEP) TEAM MEETINGS

**Alabama State Department of Education
Special Education Services**



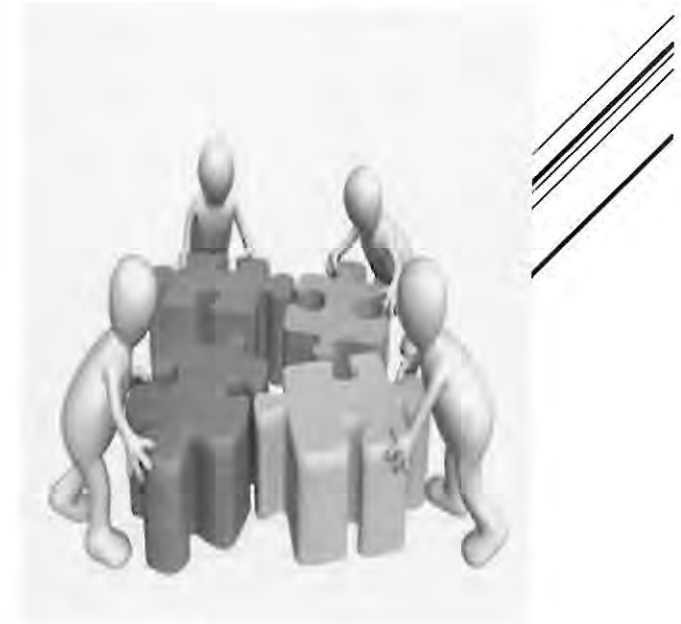
WHAT IS AN FIEP?

Facilitated Individualized Education Program (FIEP) Team meeting is a method of resolution that involves a trained facilitator to assist an IEP Team in developing an IEP for a student with a disability.

An FIEP is an option available at the request of schools and parents for conflict prevention and resolution. This service is provided at no cost to parents or schools.

A trained impartial professional (facilitator) helps the IEP Team with the IEP process. The role of the facilitator is to:

- Keep the meeting focused on the student.
- Ensure everyone at the table has a voice.
- Encourage active listening by all participants.
- Help to keep team members on task and within the time allotted for the meeting.
- Maintain impartiality and does **not** take sides, place blame or determine if a particular decision is right or wrong.
- Is not an IEP Team member and does not impose a decision on the group.



WHEN FIEP MIGHT BE NEEDED

A parent or school might consider requesting an FIEP when:

- The IEP Team is spending more time trying to resolve conflicts than working on activities that promote student achievement and success.
- Multiple IEP meetings have been convened with little or no resolution.
- One or more IEP Team member believes their voice is not being heard.
- There is a lot of new information to be processed or the student's situation is particularly complex.
- The IEP Team members want help staying focused on the IEP process.
- There is a particular disagreement that the team wants to make progress on and for whatever cannot.



THE BENEFITS OF THE FIEP TEAM MEETING

An FIEP Team meeting:

- May resolve concerns at the lowest level possible.
- Builds and improves relationships between families and schools.
- Keeps the IEP Team focused on the student.
- Models effective communication and listening.
- It does not require a separate IEP meeting to formalize the agreements that are reached.
- Identifies agreements and seeks to clarify and resolve disagreements.
- Supports better follow through and follow-up, as roles and responsibilities are discussed and planned.



HOW TO REQUEST AN FIEP MEETING

- A parent/adult student (19+)/guardian or LEA representative may request an FIEP meeting.
 - A request form is located on the ALSDE website and may be submitted by mail, fax, or email.
 - Both parties may sign the request.
- Since an FIEP is voluntary, the ALSDE FIEP coordinator will confirm that everyone is willing to work with a facilitator before assigning the request.
- Once the facilitator is assigned, the LEA will schedule the IEP meeting and send notice of the meeting to the parent/adult student/guardian.
- The parties should request an FIEP meeting at least two weeks prior to an IEP meeting.
- For any questions, please contact the ALSDE SES Dispute Resolution staff at (334) 242-8114.



How to Request an FIEP Meeting

1. A parent/adult student/guardian or LEA representative may request a FIEP meeting by completing the request form on the ALSDE website and send it (by mail, fax or email) to the ALSDE SES Dispute Resolution staff. Fill out the information on both parties and sign the form. Both parties may choose to complete the same form, or each party may complete a separate form.
2. Since a FIEP is voluntary, the ALSDE FIEP coordinator will confirm that everyone is willing to work with a facilitator to develop the student's IEP. The coordinator will then assign a facilitator for the meeting from a list of trained professionals.
3. Once a facilitator is assigned, the LEA will schedule the IEP meeting and send notice of the meeting to the facilitator and the parent/adult student/guardian. The notice will include the date, time, place and address of the meeting.
4. The parent and the school should try to request a FIEP at least two weeks prior to an IEP meeting. The FIEP coordinator will keep the parties notified about the progress of the request. Everyone must agree to the IEP meeting facilitation in order for the process to take place.
5. For any questions, please contact us at the ALSDE SES Dispute Resolution staff at (334) 242-8114.

This brochure has been prepared for persons who may wish to participate in the FIEP process to resolve disputes involving the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities. It explains the process for requesting and participating in a FIEP.



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Alabama

Facilitated Individualized Education Program (FIEP) Team Meeting



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The Facilitated IEP Team Meeting

“Facilitated IEP (FIEP) Team meeting” means an IEP meeting that utilizes an independent, state-approved, state-funded, trained facilitator as an IEP facilitator to assist the IEP Team to communicate openly and effectively, in order to resolve conflicts related to a student’s IEP.

The purpose of the facilitation process is to develop and sustain collaborative relationships between team members and to preserve and maintain a productive relationship between families and schools. A facilitated IEP meeting is one in which the trained facilitator assists members of the team in developing or reviewing a student’s IEP and addressing differing opinions. The focus of a facilitated IEP meeting is on the present and future needs of the student. Facilitated IEP meetings allow team members to focus on the student’s education in a collaborative and respectful manner.

The Benefits of the FIEP Team Meeting

A FIEP Team meeting :

1. Can resolve concerns at the lowest level possible.
2. Builds and improves relationships between families and schools.
3. Keeps the IEP Team focused on the student.
4. Models effective communication and listening.
5. Unlike mediation, does not require a separate IEP meeting to formalize the agreements that are reached.
6. Identifies agreements and seeks to clarify and resolve disagreements.
7. Supports better follow through and follow-up, as roles and responsibilities are discussed and planned.

The Facilitator’s Role

A facilitator provides expert guidance through the implementation of a compliant IEP meeting while focusing attention on the process of the meeting. An IEP meeting facilitator can not only help a team resolve differences more immediately but where they originate. The role of the facilitator is to assist team members in communicating effectively in order to reach decisions that are in the best interest of the student. The facilitator is not a member of the IEP Team or an advocate for any person on the team. His/her responsibility is to the whole team rather than an individual. He/she will not offer advice, suggestions, solutions, or legal interpretation.

How is a FIEP Meeting Different?

In a FIEP Team meeting, you can expect :

1. A meeting agenda that is developed collaboratively and inclusive of all concerns.
2. Ground rules that provide structure and focus for the meeting.
3. A facilitator who treats all parties fairly and with respect.
4. A focus on listening for the purpose of understanding.

When Should I Request a Facilitator?

When the IEP Team process proves difficult or ineffective at developing an IEP acceptable to the parents and school district, either party may request a facilitator, but both parties must agree upon the use of a facilitator.

