ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY & THE IEP - TIPS FOR PARENTS

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), public schools must provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all eligible children with disabilities. To do so, schools are required to develop **Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)** that identify the child's educational goals and needs, including the need for accommodations and/or assistive technology (AT) devices and services.

UNDERSTAND THE IEP PROCESS

The process of developing a student's IEP may differ from one school system to another. However, every school must contact parents in writing to request consent and invite the parent to all IEP meetings.

The initial IEP evaluation must be conducted within 60 days of receiving consent. Remember that parents are a child's most effective advocate. Use the time before the meeting to prepare. It may be helpful to talk with other parents who have IEP experience and to look online for family-friendly resources. CTD is one such source and can point you to others.

ATTEND THE IEP MEETING

The IEP team should have one or more family members and teachers who are familiar with the child's strengths and challenges. The team may also include a school administrator or counselor. At least one team member should be knowledgeable about assistive technology options. In addition to the formal notes being taken, parents should take their own notes and keep good records of the entire process.

★ Insist that consideration of AT devices and services be included in the IEP process. If the term "assistive technology" is not a separate section on the IEP form, look for terms such as "accommodations, supports, program modifications or supplementary aids and services." These are places where AT devices and services can be identified.

APPROVE THE IEP

If you agree with the educational plan, approve the IEP and services will begin. Parents do have the right to disagree with the school's decisions, including those concerning AT. Put all concerns in writing and then ask for a meeting to try to resolve disagreements.

REVIEW THE IEP ANNUALLY

Each student's IEP must be reviewed at least once a year. Make necessary revisions to the IEP according to the child's progress. Remember to allow "growth" in a child's assistive technology tools, as children often exceed initial expectations.

Learn about AT choices. Many are not specialized devices, but programs that run on widely available mobile devices. **Assistive technology can be an invaluable aid to your child**, allowing them to participate more fully with their peers and achieve their learning goals!

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