



parent network
+ resource center

*“To accomplish great things, we must not only act,
but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.”*

I.E.P. Tool Kit



A non-profit organization founded in 1983, Matrix serves families of children with disabilities in the North Bay and is one of over 100 Parent Training and Information Centers (PTI) nationwide, authorized through the U.S. Dept. of Education's IDEA law.

Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center
Helpline: 800.578.2592
www.matrixparents.org

Offices located at:

94 Galli Drive, Suite C, Novato CA 94949 and 1615 W. Texas Street, Suite 4, Fairfield CA 94533



I.E.P. Tool Kit OVERVIEW

What can help you be an effective advocate for your child at an I.E.P. meeting?

- having information and data
- being organized in your thoughts and with your documents
- communicating in a manner that helps you get the information you need and to have others listen

This I.E.P. Tool Kit provides you with some basic tools to help you better advocate for your child. One page explains possible steps to take as you plan for an I.E.P. meeting. Another page provides tips on organizing your child's school related papers. Two forms are provided: one to organize data about your child's needs and strengths so you can sort what might be needed in the I.E.P. document and the other to take to the I.E.P. meeting to keep track of the needs and questions you want to discuss at the meeting. Also included are resources that can provide more information on:

- Special Education I.E.P. plans
- Effective Communication
- Your child's special needs

As you prepare, keep in mind the quote from Maya Angelou:

"I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better."

There is so much information available, it can seem overwhelming. Be gentle with yourself as you learn. Overtime, you will feel more confident and knowledgeable.



I.E.P. Planning Steps

Building an IEP starts with understanding a child's needs, it starts with a good assessment.

Step 1 - INFORMATION – What information do I have?

Gather all information that shows your child's needs such as: assessment reports, work samples, teacher comments, report cards, observations, and attendance and discipline records. To prepare for the discussion of assessments you have not yet approved, some parents highlight different sections:

Yellow = need more clarification to understand

Orange = inaccurate information

Green = agreed need

Step 2 – NEEDS – What do I know from this information?

Make a list of your child's needs from the above information & note next to each need how you know this – what piece of information supports this need? **Use our IEP Planning Worksheet form.**

Step 3 – PRIORITIZE – What is most important?

Prioritize the needs – high, medium, low

Step 4 – INTERVENTIONS – What might help my child?

Think about what may be needed at school. Special instruction may be needed to teach skills. Other areas may need an accommodation which may be a change in the environment, equipment or expectations. *The professional's job is to provide the interventions. Parents should ask about possible ideas since parent signature is needed to approve of the plan.*

Step 5 – QUESTIONS – What do I still need?

Write down questions to ask the IEP team. These might include questions to:

- clarify any information you have
- get more information and data
- better understand the connection between the information you have and the needs you see.
- Learn about interventions: pros and cons of various approaches, which ones were not considered and why, which ones are evidenced based

Step 6 – PREPARATION – What will I take to the IEP meeting?

- Use our IEP Meeting Tracker form to transfer key information you want to present at the meeting
- Update your child's IEP binder for easy access to your record
- Any resources (articles, pages from books) that support a request.

IMPORTANT: *An Individual Education Plan is a plan to address your child's needs so that he or she can access the curriculum at school. A child's needs might include academic, cognitive, physical, emotional, social, functional life skills. Your child may have other needs that are not the responsibility of the educational system.*

Tips for the IEP Meeting can be found in our HELP Sheet....IEP Meetings

Organizing School Related Papers

Getting organized will help you support your child and the school in meeting your child's unique needs. A binder containing your child's important papers will help you see trends and patterns and can improve your communication with the school. Creating a one page summary of your child's strengths, interests and needs to give teachers at the beginning of the year has proved helpful to many parents.

Create a One Page Profile

Keep the profile to one page to make it easier for busy teachers to get the highlights of your child's IEP as well as some more personal attributes. Categories might include:

- Basic information: age, siblings, pets, interests, summer activities
- Medical: medication and any impact at school (i.e. not hungry at lunch, often thirsty, lethargy) and/or any physical limitations (i.e. seizure resulted in left side weak)
- Education: tutoring, remediation, school changes, IEP date, classroom accommodations
- Strengths and challenges

Obtain and Organize Records

Check to see if you have the last 2 or 3 years of your child's records. If not, make a written request for your child's records, both the cumulative and Special Education files.

Once you have all the necessary papers related to the IEP, you are ready to sort and organize:

- Use a large 3-ring binder. Make sure you have a paper hole-punch too!
- File chronologically with the most recent on the top.
- Put something that reminds you of your child on the front cover such as a picture
- Put a school calendar and your Special Education Rights in the pockets.
- Use tabs to divide your papers into categories that best suit your needs: **(suggestions)**
 - Contact information for teachers, therapists, administrators, etc
 - IEP documents: meeting notice, eligibility determination, goals and objectives, services, placement, behavior plans, comments, etc. Keep all related IEP documents and notes.
 - Assessments: school and independent and any other reports on your child
 - Child's work: Report cards, progress reports, test results, and work samples.
 - Copies/logs of all communication: Letters, notes, emails and phone calls to and from the school and others serving your child.
 - State or standardized test results: STAR, SAT, CAPA, etc.
 - Medical summary: a list of medications and dosages your child takes at home or at school, (note any changes in the behavior, reaction and dosage), and appointments
 - Your observations: Include notes or observations of your child pertinent to school.

*Matrix Parent Network and Resource Center
Serving Marin, Napa, Solano and Sonoma Counties
Empowering families of children with special needs to understand and access the systems that serve them.*

www.matrixparents.org

94 Galli Drive, Suite C, Novato, CA 94949

1615 West Texas Street, Suite 4, Fairfield, CA 94533

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I.E.P. Planning Worksheet

Meeting Date:

Priority	What are my child's needs, challenges and strengths?	How do I know this? <i>What data do I have?</i>	What are some possible ideas for the IEP? <i>goals, accommodations, modifications, services</i>
	<i>EXAMPLES</i>		
	<i>Can't taking clear notes during lectures</i>	<i>Work samples, test scores</i>	<i>Instruction in key concept note taking, peer note taker, provide teacher lecture outline</i>
	<i>Spinning in circles at recess</i>	<i>Report by playground aide and other children</i>	<i>OT suggests sensory activity with peer buddy</i>
	<i>Reads slowly with mistakes</i>	<i>Audiotape of reading at home, Test score of reading fluency – see RSP evaluation page 4.</i>	<i>More time in resource? Different reading program that is evidenced based</i>
	<i>Flunks chapter tests</i>	<i>Online grading report and tests</i>	<i>Teach how to memorize, provide study sheets</i>
	<i>Doesn't follow teacher directions</i>	<i>Teacher notes home Feb 6, 22, March 5, behavior warning from principal March 7, 11</i>	<i>NO IDEAS!!</i>
	<i>STRENGTH: works well with peers</i>	<i>Teacher report</i>	<i>Use of peer study groups and tutors</i>



I.E.P. Meeting Tracking of Issues

Meeting Date:

Take this sheet to the IEP meeting with you

Priority	Need or Strength	Based on data in...	Possible idea for IEP	Covered in Meeting	Result/Decision	Follow-up?



I.E.P. Meeting Tracking of Issues

Meeting Date:

Take this sheet to the IEP meeting with you

	QUESTIONS to ask to better understand my child's needs & program	Based on information in...	I need to know this because...	Covered in meeting	ANSWERS	Follow up?

IEP Resources

Selected Materials

- *All About IEPs: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about IEPs* (2010) – Peter Wright, Esq. & Pamela Wright
- *From Emotions to Advocacy: The Special Education Survival Guide* (2005) – Peter Wright, Esq. & Pamela Wright
- *Negotiating the Special Education Maze: A Guide for Parents & Teachers* (2008) – Winifred Anderson, Stephen Chitwood, Deidre Hayden & Cherie Takemoto
- *Special Needs Advocacy Resource Book* (2008) – Rich Weinfeld & Michelle Davis
- *Working Together: A Parent's Guide to Parent and Professional Partnership and Communication Within Special Education* (2006) – Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers
www.taalliance.org/publications/pdfs/communicationbook.pdf
- *Transition to Adult Living: An Information and Resource Guide* (2007) - CALSTAT, www.calstat.org/transitionguide.html
- *Special Education Rights and Responsibilities* (2005) – CASE and Disability Rights California www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs504001
- *A Parent's Guide to Special Education: Insider Advice on How to Navigate the System and Help Your Child Succeed.* (2005) – Linda Wilmshurst, Ph.D & Alan Brue, Ph.D
- *Nolo's IEP Guide: Learning Disabilities* (2005) – Lawrence Siegel, JD
- *Why Johnny Doesn't Behave: Twenty Tips & Measurable BIPs* (2003) – Barbara Bateman & Annemieke Golly
- *Straight Talk About Psychological Testing for Kids* (2003) – Ellen Braaten and Gretchen Felopulos

Selected Websites (also see above):

- www.matrixparents.org
- www.fape.org
- www.cde.ca.gov
- www.nichcy.org



OTHER related MATRIX RESOURCES – Online at
www.matrixparents.org :

Interactive I.E.P. Training

Information Packets *see also "other publications" from other agencies*

- Advocacy & Communication
- Getting Organized
- I.E.P.s
- Behavior
- Resolving Disagreements

Information Packets on Special Needs

see also our Resource section "links", linking you to disability specific agencies

- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Asperger's Syndrome
- Emotional Difficulties
- Learning Disabilities
- Speech and Language Challenges

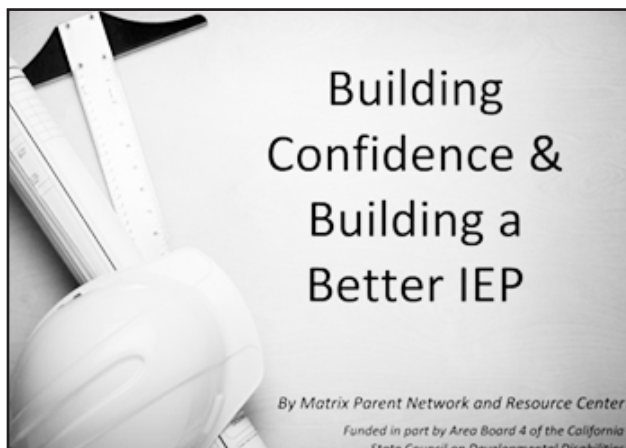
HELP Sheets

1. I don't think my child's IEP is working well, what do I do?
2. My child's behavior is getting in the way of learning.
3. How do I evaluate treatments and interventions?
8. My teen who receives Special Education is turning 18, what should I know or do?
9. My child's Special Education testing is hard to understand.
12. How can I communicate better with my child's IEP team?
13. My child is struggling with reading, what do I do?
14. Does my child need a one-to-one aide?
16. How do I know if my child is making progress on their IEP?
17. How do I know what questions to ask?

Our offices in Novato and Fairfield both have libraries that specialize in materials related to special needs, and our HELPLine staff is available to answer your questions.

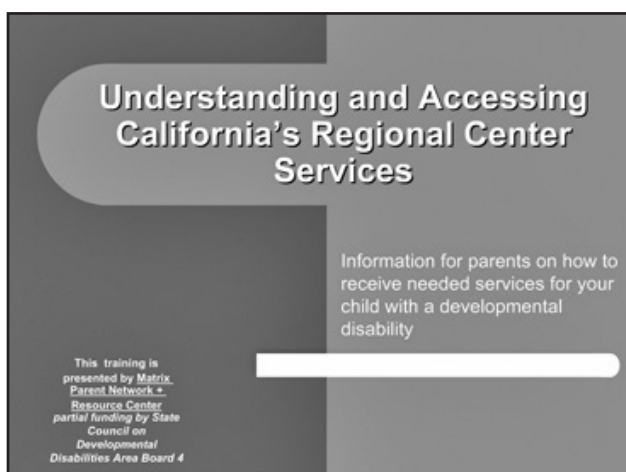
online training at www.matrixparents.org

Matrix now offers FREE online training. These courses are designed to help you develop valuable skills that will allow you to be the strongest advocate on behalf of your child.



Directed toward parents of children with special needs, topics included in the training are:

- The principles of special education (IDEA)
- Parent rights
- Key features of the IEP
- Least restrictive environment
- Effective advocacy



Directed toward parents of children with developmental disabilities, topics included in the training are:

- The laws that direct regional center services
- Direct links to many legal citations and helpful resources
- Description of the requirements for the Individual Program Plan
- How to prepare for an IPP meeting
- What to do if you disagree
- Advocacy resources

Visit our website for more information and resources including:

- Community Resource Guides
- Information Packets and other Publications
- Calendar of Local Events
- Links to other Online Resources
- Current News and Updates on Special Needs
- Birth to Three Early Developmental Services



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